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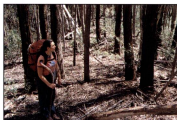
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Cover Nick Tapp pauses above Lake Oberon on the Western Arthur Range, South-west Tasmania. Chris Baxter

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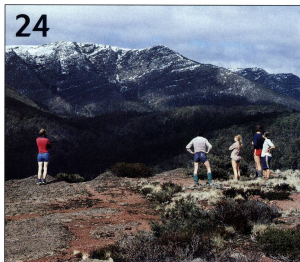
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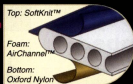
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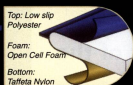


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Rednecks against forests

Victoria's Bracks Government shows its true colours

IN FEBRUARY VICTORIAN LABOR PREMIER Steve Bracks issued a statement called 'Our Forests, Our Future'. The headline item from the statement was that the volume of saw-logs 'harvested' in the State would be reduced by some 30 per cent. The immediate response was restrained optimism from those who had been concerned about the future management of Victoria's forests. Yet within just two months the conservation movement was speaking with one voice in strongly denouncing the government's record of the grossest forest mismanagement, and all major conservation organisations had unified in a campaign to protect our 'most ancient and precious forests'. In addition, local communities in three most affected areas—the Otways, Central Highlands and East Gippsland—were mobilised against forest destruction as never before. When seasoned Wilderness Society campaigner Gavan McFadzean went on record as saying 'Amazingly... the record of the previous (Kennett) government on forest protection is far superior to that of Bracks', few conservationists could find cause to dispute this claim. What happened?

For a start, closer examination of Bracks's statement revealed three significant concerns. First, the much touted 'significant reduction' is anything but that. Because saw-logs account for only 20 per cent of all trees removed from Victorian forests (for Tasmania the figure is a staggeringly low 7 per cent!), wood-chipping—by far the major destroyer of native forests—is to continue unchecked. (A Concerned Residents of East Gippsland report last year disclosed how truck loads of wood-chips from old-growth trees were being sold for less than the price of a loaf of bread!) Secondly, the government has finally acknowledged the truth of what the conservation movement has been saying for years; that Victorian forests have been logged unsustainably. The government has also acknowledged that its figures on timber yield have been consistently wrong. They have overestimated the amount of saw-logs that could be obtained from a given area of forest—by up to 50 per cent. In other words, the government counted on obtaining logs from trees that did not exist! Conservationists say that the acknowledged gross unreliability of government timber-yield figures is an indication that

logging continues to be unsustainable. The third significant concern is that the government now seeks to introduce cable logging to log forests in steep country that were previously out of reach of loggers. Conservationists point to the severe erosion caused by such practices in Tasmania.

officers from the Department of Natural Resources & Environment and police were brought in from as far away as Melbourne to break the blockade. In a new tactic of doubtful legality, DNRE declared a 'temporary exclusion zone' for up to 30 kilometres around the logging, so that to be anywhere near the logging incurred the risk of being arrested. It was not possible for the press or the public to see what was being done to their own forests. The cost to the public of this logging, including for police and DNRE enforcement officers, was about \$2 million. The royalties received for the timber taken were little more than five per cent of



Out of sight, out of mind? The view from above the screen of trees: the Andersons Mill Road log dump, near Marysville, central Victoria. Eli Greig

The devastating truth of the matter was revealed within a fortnight of the release of Our Forests, Our Future. Logging crews from elsewhere in Victoria were summoned to East Gippsland's Goolgook forest. This is one of the most valuable areas of old-growth forest in Victoria and had been successfully blockaded for five years—Australia's longest, continuous blockade by environmentalists. In a huge operation of a scale never before seen in Australia's forests, enforcement

'the needs of the wood-chipping industry continue to determine the fate of our forests'

this—about \$110 000! The government sought to defend its actions on the grounds that 'the State could be liable for millions of dollars if it did not meet licence commitments'. However, there is no legal obligation for the State to pay compensation if it varies sustainable yield. TWS summed up: 'Our concerns that the Premier's recent announcement would have no impact in protecting old-growth forests have now been tragically justified, as the needs of the wood-chipping industry continue to determine the fate of our forests.'

The results of an independent survey of public opinion in the 'logging heartland' of East Gippsland released on 8 May reveals an extraordinarily high level of support for the conservationists' position: see box.

Another region where logging is particularly contentious is Victoria's Central Highlands, site of Melbourne's water catchments and a long-established, forest-based tourism industry. After Goolgook was logged, similar exclusion zones were set up in Wombat State Forest in this region. But such was the extent and depth of feeling in the com-

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munity that it defied them *en masse* on 19 April, forcing the DNRE to leave without making any arrests.

Community resistance to logging the Otways, catchment area for Geelong's water-supply, is no less powerful. At the beginning of the year conservationists struck a 'peace deal' with the government, agreeing that clear-fell logging would continue in particular areas. However, as a result of the government over-estimating timber yield from these areas by more than 50 per cent it now seeks to break the 'peace deal' and log the very areas that were to be excluded! As a consequence the Otway Ranges Environment Network announced: 'The department again has been shown to be incompetent or is deceiving the public on saw-log estimates for the Otways.' OREN also pointed out that 'over 80 per cent of the trees extracted were wood-chipped, logging is clearly wood-chip driven'.

On 1 May DNRE announced the launch of 'dynamic education trailers...developed with sponsorship provided by Neville Smith Timber Industries and Australian Paper as part of a partnership with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment...to increase the availability of forest education programmes to all schools in Victoria'. Revelation of this 'partnership' between DNRE and the logging industry is hardly news. But we can be sure that these 'education programmes' will not tell about the:

- court cases lost by DNRE because it authorised illegal logging;
- concerns for the future of many species as a result of logging, held by eminent scientists;
- huge loss of water from clear-felling revealed in reports;
- government subsidies to this mendicant industry;
- loss of jobs in the industry as wood-chipping takes over;
- complete mismanagement which has caused over-logging for the last decade; and
- impact on competition of the special funding of the logging industry.

When a government department which is the main protagonist of logging in Victoria uses its position to influence thought on a political issue in support of its actions, it oversteps its role. The Westminster system of government requires that political decisions be made by politicians, who are accountable to the people, and that government departments remain politically neutral. This 'education programme' shows that, far from respecting its proper function, DNRE is taking a partisan approach on a sensitive issue in defiance of its constitutional role.

Meanwhile, the logging industry proposed that areas of State forest be set aside permanently for the industry's guaranteed use. The Victorian Liberal Opposition supports this proposal and the government is considering it. The Federal Liberal Government has sought to achieve just such 'certainty' to the logging industry under existing State Regional Forest Agreements with its bill—passed recently despite prolonged opposition by Greens Senator Bob Brown—that effectively divests the

Commonwealth of the power to control logging.

But in the five years since the first RFA came into force, there has not been net-worth value adding, a steady decline in jobs, and ever increasing taxpayer-funded subsidisation of logging—to say nothing of the effects on the environment of the increase in logging. Both saw-logging and wood-chipping have significantly increased in Victoria since the election of the Labor Government in 1999.

The united movement by all of Victoria's major conservation organisations—including TWS, Friends of the Earth and the ACF—to save the State's remaining old-growth forests from destruction calls for 'a significant restructure of native forest management and

Survey of residents of East Gippsland, April 2002

What has more potential to provide long-term secure jobs?

Logging	29%
Tourism	59%
Don't know	12%

Do you think old growth should be clear-fell logged?

Yes	23%
No	67%
Don't know	11%

Is the level of woodchipping...

Just right	25%
Too low	6%
Too high	46%
Don't know	22%

If there were alternatives to supply our sawn-timber needs through the use of plantations, would you agree with a plan to phase logging out of native forests?

Yes	70%
No	24%
Don't know	6%

Do you think the Regional Forest Agreements have worked?

Yes	15%
No	50%
Don't know	35%

Survey of 400 residents (which gives a confidence level of 95%) of East Gippsland, with surveyed demographics reflecting those of the area. Survey conducted by NCS Pearson in April 2002.

a clear strategy to shift the wood products industry into sustainable plantation forestry...

Things are indeed at crisis point in Victoria. The stage has been reached where a large part of the community is saying 'enough is enough', that it is time to end wood-chipping in native forests and to force the logging industry on to a sustainable basis by utilising its vast plantation reserves to meet the demand for saw-logs. Wild readers are urged to be part of this history-making movement. It will certainly prevail; it is up to all of us to ensure that this happens while there is still some old-growth forest left standing. To find out how you can become involved, see www.wilderness.org.au/projects/Forests/royalty1.html

Chris Baxter

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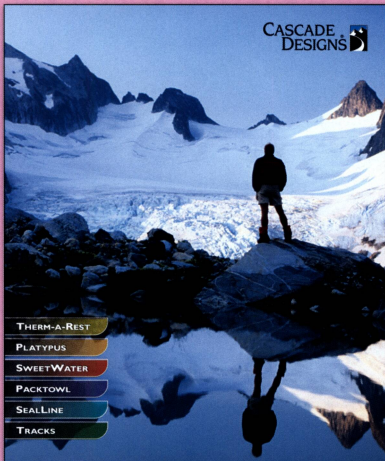
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Mud lakes and exposed roots

All in a day's walking?

I recently walked McKays Track in South-west Tasmania. I had walked it before—35 years ago. When I first walked it, it had been raining heavily for over a week and there were mud patches, but nothing like the mud-fest I have just experienced.

This time there were mud lakes up to five metres wide and waist-deep in some spots, caused by hordes of walkers using the firmer edges of the track.

Some vertical sections of the track to Federation Peak were negotiable only on exposed roots—some broke underfoot. The vegetation around these sections of track has not regenerated. As I climbed and descended the steeper sections, large clumps of soil would shift, adding to the destruction.

Now is the time for the provision of a decent all-weather McKays Track, and ladders to protect eroded, steep sections of track for the large number of people who obviously use this area, especially as signs are in place requesting walkers to stay on the tracks to prevent the spread of plant disease. If this means boardwalks and increased fees, so be it. What I see now is the desecration of a unique environment and the argument that making access difficult will control usage clearly does not hold water.

Henry Berenson
(by email)

Following a wetter than usual summer, the tracks in Tasmania, particularly in the South-west, are in an even more dreadful state than usual; some just seem like an endless bog. With the heavy usage the tracks get, the future outlook—at least in the short-to-medium term—looks grim.

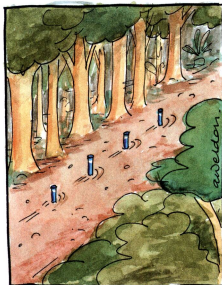
I have observed a particular range in the South-west over a period of more than 20 years. Originally it had very little sign of walker impact but this has gradually changed and recently, on my first visit in eight years, it now has a very distinct track with many boggy sections.

It comes down to walker impact and how to manage the areas sustainably. The way to achieve this has been a controversial question for over a decade and once again the Parks & Wildlife Service is attempting to find a tolerable solution, this time by a consultative process to establish what the limits of acceptable change might be.

Peter Franklin
(by email)

I have just finished employment as a Track Ranger with the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service, working on the Overland Track. I'd like to bring to your attention the issue of trekking poles and environmental degradation caused by them. These poles are fitted

with a tungsten carbide point. Tungsten carbide is harder than stone and the poles are causing significant damage by: a) ripping up vegetation that is stabilising track edges (as the poles are driven into soft edges), b) producing large scratches on rocks where they have slipped, and c) acting as vectors for the spread of the *Phytophthora* die-back fungus (especially when used over the edges of boardwalks constructed to prevent its spread).



BUSHWALKING IN S.W. TASMANIA.

Whilst some people would probably consider this a small matter, the fragile alpine terrain is very slow to recover and the scratching and die back are going to be visible for centuries. There is already evidence of damage on the Overland Track (especially on Mt Ossa and through Du Cane Gap) and also on Mt Eliza and Mt Anne in the South-west National Park.

Trekking poles have increased in popularity in recent years, probably because of exposure from European visitors and promotion by importers, so I was hoping that there would be some way you could encourage their responsible use. Techniques include using the rubber feet available as accessories, only placing the tip on hardened track surfaces and using a staff with a large end as a substitute.

Trevor Grigson
(by email)

See the item on the subject in *Equipment* next issue. Editor

An appeal for lawyers

I think that your closing statement in the Editorial of *Wild* no 84 is most appropriate: 'We might all consider improving our un-

derstanding of the meaning of personal responsibility and practise it.'

I submit that it is not the 'ambulance-chasing' lawyers who fuel the legal fire, rather advertising and adventure culture which lures the inexperienced into the wilderness. Taking your own magazine as an example, the overpowering number of advertisements are not for first-aid training courses, or texts on bushcraft, rather for packs urging us to exceed boundaries and trekking poles to free the soul. It seems that expensive equipment has become a substitute for respect and caution in the wilderness.

This media culture is responsible for the injury which leads to litigation.

Indeed, you referred to four cases in your Editorial, three of which were arguably the result of inexperience—wearing inappropriate boots, pitching a tent under a tree and climbing with an equally inexperienced partner. Before trying to fix the legal system by legislating, or blaming lawyers, it would be wise to look for the causes of litigation culture.

I have been reading your magazine religiously for about five years and have been hiking for about ten. Thank you for your work.

Adam Chernok
(by email)

...thanks for the great mag—I eagerly devour it every time it comes. You have a great balance of stuff. I especially appreciated the Editorial on the legalities in *Wild* no 84—it hit the nail right on the head...

Dave Arthur
(by email)

Tracks go walkabout

I read with some interest 'Over the Ranges' by Glenn van der Kniff in *Wild* no 83. His trouble finding Track 107 from the Big River end reminded me of a trip I did in the area a few years ago with a school group. We had ascended the Staircase Spur to Mt Bogong and had followed the Long Spur to a link track across the Big River marked on the *Bogong Alpine Area* map. Several hours were spent looking for this elusive track and we were benighted before reaching Kellys Hut. Returning home and checking a later edition of the map, this mystery track had disappeared—a figment of the map makers' imagination?

Stuart McLean
(by email)

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email: wild@wild.com.au



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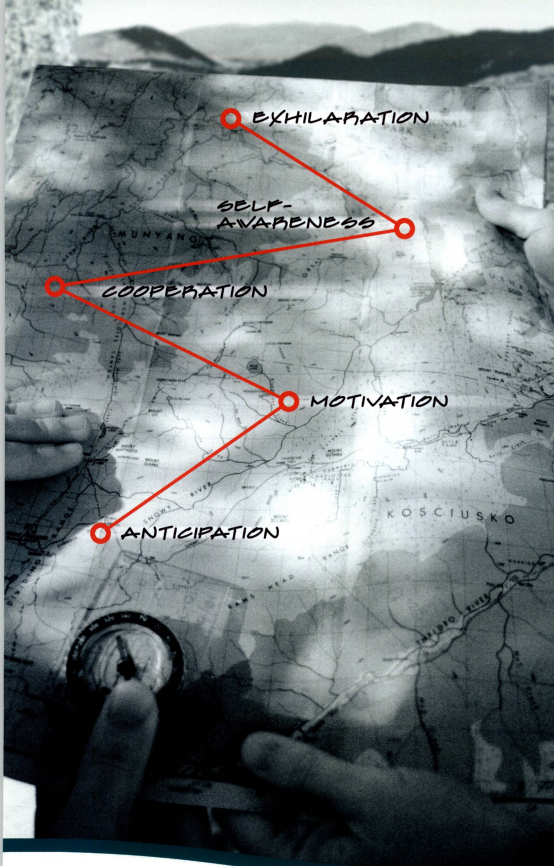
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Poleward bound

Eric Philips and Jon Muir began a trek to the North Pole in March; the pair hope to be the first Australians to reach the North Pole unsupported. On 4 April the Melbourne *Age* reported that Philips and Muir had lost contact with their support team and that their personal tracking beacon had ceased to emit signals. It was thought that the freezing conditions probably caused equipment failure.

A Russian plane which supplies remote communities detoured from its normal path to fly over the polar route and spotted the adventurers. As the plane flew over, Philips and Muir gave their thumbs up to show all was well. On 4 April the plane flew over again and was able to determine their position at 84 degrees 54 minutes north, 88 degrees 58 minutes east. They were camped near a polynia, an open lead of water much larger than usual which may have slowed them down.

On 8 April the support team began to receive information again. The message was: 'Spirits high, confident.' It appears that all the overhead activity had made Philips and Muir think something was amiss. They must have looked over the tracker and resealed the antenna, which had been damaged when Philips's fully loaded kayak fell off the truck on the way to the airport.

So the pair continues. Late on 10 April the message was: 'Good conditions, sledging', which means they are making good time and covering distance on their skis.

The pair have covered 508 kilometres on the way to the Pole and have another 418 kilometres to go. Muir and Philips aim to arrive at their destination in the first few days of May.

Brigitte Muir commented, 'It has been a huge relief to see the boys are moving well, and I am glad we sent in the Cerpolex plane to check on their condition and position. It probably made them aware that something was amiss. They must have had a close look at the Argos and realised that it needed a bit of TLC! Whatever they did to it, it worked...it is my belief that Jon and Eric can still make it to the North Pole unsupported, and I am sending them good vibes every day. Go, boys, go!'

Philips's wife Suzy Blair added: 'It has been a long week but I always felt that the problem was most likely to be damage to their equipment. In the first 16 days of the trip they came face to face with a polar bear, survived a dip in the Arctic Ocean and lost a ski, a skin and a binding. Despite all this they have managed to progress well, so I have great confidence in their strength, determination and ability to improvise.'



As this issue was going to print, we learned that Philips and Muir arrived safely at the North Pole, some hours ahead of their self-appointed deadline. They are the first Australians to make the trek 'unassisted'. The 1000 kilometre journey took the pair 58 days.

Eric Philips and Jon Muir looking...fluffy before their expedition to the North Pole.



Treseder injury stops North Pole trek

Peter Treseder suffered frostbite on his left foot during the first few days of the North Pole trek which eventually forced Australian adventurers Tim Jarvis and Peter Treseder to end their bid to become the first Australians to reach both the North and South Poles unsupported.

The team, who achieved the world record fastest time for an unsupported trek to the South Pole in 1999, were on course to complete an historic double having covered about 300 kilometres of the 950 kilometre total journey to the North Pole.



Tim Jarvis contemplating the next day's travel over the frozen ocean during his attempt, with Peter Treseder, to reach the North Pole. Jarvis collection

Both men had broken through the ice on several occasions and endured the harsh conditions with extremely low temperatures and often poor visibility, but progress was on schedule. Jarvis was breaking the trail through the very difficult terrain to give Treseder the best chance of conserving energy and consequently warmth to give his injury the greatest opportunity to recover. However, on day 18 Treseder felt that the possibility of his frostbite worsening was too serious a risk and that it would be unwise to continue.

'We both knew the risks associated with this trip', said Jarvis. 'There is no challenge where success is a guaranteed outcome. We were, however, progressing well and it was a great disappointment to terminate the trip having completed the most difficult phase when sleds were at their heaviest, the temperatures at their lowest, and the likelihood of encountering thin ice and polar bears at their greatest.'

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The expedition continues to support the Smith Family's 'Learning for Life' programme which aims to give disadvantaged children a better opportunity in life by the provision of grants for education. Jarvis and Treseder will ensure that people who donated funds to the Smith Family's 'Plant the Flag at the Pole' appeal will have their names on a flag that is taken to the North Pole.

SAM CAREY

The founding member of organised speleology in Australia died in March at the age of ninety. Sam Carey founded the Tasmanian Cavermeering Club, Australia's first caving club, in 1946. He will be remembered by many as the cheerful, enthusiastic professor of geology at the University of Tasmania. His research interest was plate tectonics. Before this he was an instructor of Australian Army commandos based in Rockhampton; during the Second World War he explored, named and used many of the Mt Etina caves as a training ground. He will be sorely missed.

Stephen Burton

SCROGGIN

- The first 55 kilometres of a **new long-distance walking track in South Australia** opened on 7 April. The 500 kilometre **Federation Trail** is to cross the Mt Lofty Ranges by the Barossa Range and through the Wakefield River valley to Auburn where it will join the Reising Trail to Clare.
- It is claimed that **white-water rafting** is one of the fastest growing adventure sports in the world—more than 30 million people are actively involved. The success of the Australian team relies heavily on the support and financial backing

The Zuytdorp challenge



From left, Les Allen, Terry Bolland, Tel Williams and John Di Nucci in Jurien, Western Australia. Marian Mayes

In January Les Allen, Terry Bolland, John Di Nucci and Tel Williams set out on an 800 kilometre sea kayak journey from Perth to Shark Bay. The Zuytdorp Cliffs were the biggest challenge; they would have to paddle 175 kilometres from Kalbarri to Dulverton Bay without landing.

They averaged 60 kilometres a day to Kalbarri, where injury forced Allen to withdraw. Bolland, Di Nucci and Williams had two days' rest before departing at dawn for their attempt on the cliffs.

However, contrary to the forecast, the wind intensified during the day and continued to blow relentlessly at 30–35 knots all night. Williams kept falling asleep in spite of the rough sea and enormous

waves so they stopped paddling and drifted while Di Nucci supported him for more than three hours.

At about 4 am, when he let go of Williams's kayak, Di Nucci capsized, lost contact with his boat and had to be assisted by Bolland.

When they landed at Dulverton Bay they had been cramped in their cockpits for more than 30 hours. Difficulties experienced by various members of the group included sleep deprivation, hypothermia and fatigue. Strong winds forced the group to take a rest day before they were able to complete the final 39 kilometres to Steep Point at Shark Bay.

Marian Mayes

Wild Diary

Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack/sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

June

- 22–23 12/24 hr NT Championships **R** NT (08) 8941 1059
22–23 Winter 24 hr **R** WA (08) 9342 9213

July

- 3 Jul– Jacobs Creek Outback to Adelaide **B** SA (08) 8363 7198
1 Oct Bushwalk **B**
19–21 Pump 'n' Pedals Cairns Eco Adventure Race **M** Qld (07) 4053 1555
20–21 24 hr SA Championships **R** SA (08) 8271 2712
26–27 5th World Rogaining Championships Czech Republic **R** www.top.cz
27–28 Winter Classic (Mt Hotham) **M** Vic (03) 9897 3536

August

- 3 Snogaine **R** Vic (03) 9438 6626
24–25 24 hr WA Championships **R** WA (08) 9342 9213
24 8 hr **R** Vic (03) 9438 6626
24 11th Lake Macquarie Annual Rogaine 6/12 hr **R** NSW (02) 4973 3012
31 Kangaroo Hoppet, Birkebeiner and Joey Hoppet **S** Vic (03) 5754 1045

September

- 21–22 24 hr Vic Championships **R** Vic (03) 9438 6626
22 6 hr **R** NT (08) 8941 1059

October

- 5–7 Perisher Cup, three events—cross-country relay, giant slalom and jump **S** NSW (02) 9552 2701
7–9 National October Outdoor Trade Show, Melbourne (traders only) Vic (03) 9879 8671
19 Spring 12 hr **R** SA (08) 8271 2712
19 Spring 12 hr **R** WA (08) 9342 9213
19 8/12 hr **R** Vic (03) 9438 6626
19–20 24 hr NSW Championships **R** NSW (02) 9990 3400
26–28 Adelaide Oxfam Trailwalker 100 km team walk **B** SA (08) 8223 3405
27 Red Cross Yarra Challenge 250 m canoe relay sprint **C** Vic (03) 8327 7833

November

- 24 6 hr Social **R** NSW (02) 9990 3480

of sponsors. To sponsor the team, contact Graham Maifreddi (07) 4066 7779.

- Renowned wildlife and landscape artist **Susan McInnes** drowned in a boating accident on 11 February, as reported in the Melbourne Age on 14 February. McInnes was fishing with her husband and son and a friend; their boat was swept into the ocean when a sandbar collapsed after heavy rains.

Corrections and amplifications

The article 'Victoria's Toughest Country' in *Wild* no 84 states that the walk of the Victorian border between the Murray River and Conference Point described in *Wild* no 69 failed as it ended at Mt Tingeriny. As the article in issue 69 points out, the whole walk was eventually completed, in six stages. The article in issue 84 didn't make it clear that it considered a traverse of this route relevant to that article only if it was completed as a single, uninterrupted push.

Activities: **B** bushwalking, **C** canoeing, **M** multisports, **R** rogaining, **S** skiing Organisations: **RC** Red Cross Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaining associations

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email: wild@wild.com.au

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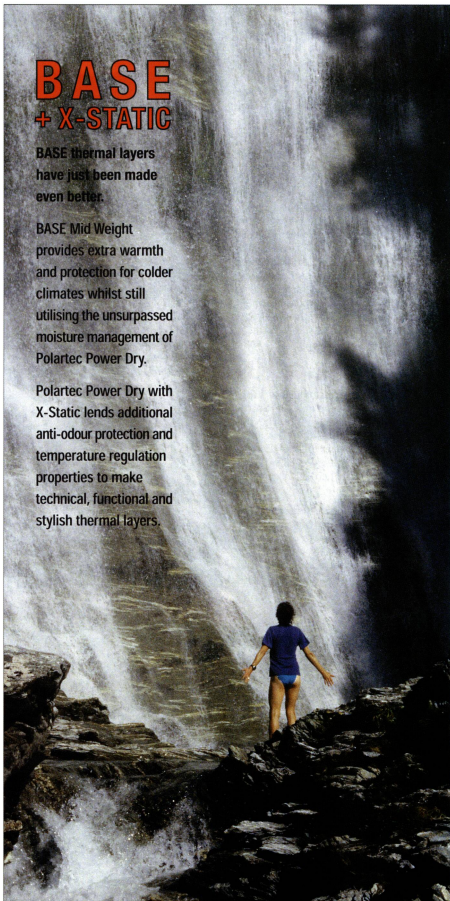
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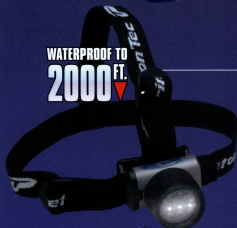
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The born-again bushwalker

Quentin Chester plans a great escape



Out there again, at last! From left, Ross Hodgens, Nick Tapp and David Gairns below Moraine A, Western Arthur Range, South-west Tasmania. Chris Baxter

YOU KNOW THE FEELING. ONE DAY YOU wake up and realise that it has been too long—much too long—since the last walk. Of course there have been day-trips here and there. And, yes, there was a week at the beach back in January. But when was the last time you trundled off with a bulging pack, a new map and supplies for a week? Is it six months? Can it be a year? Surely not two?

Life has a genius for clouding over so many good things. One week just keeps rolling into the next. Days evaporate in a murk of meetings and reports. Home becomes a fog of family obligations. And wherever your thoughts turn, the horizon is massed with horrible news and information. There is only one thing to do: start plotting your escape. By small measures and occasional stealth an itinerary takes shape. In your own small way you become a seeker of asylum.

I've always believed that some of the strongest feelings about a trip are stirred long before the bootlaces are tied. For weeks, maybe even months, your imagination sparks with possibilities. In the midst of chores or traffic, or on the brink of sleep, dream-like

thoughts arrive unbidden to jag your senses—the early morning ruffle of a fly-sheet, wood smoke curling through a tree canopy, the shrieks as weary bodies launch into a water-hole, sunrise over a cloud-filled valley, the clack and crunch of boots on scree, a pearl-escence night sky—some of these images are auguries, others pure fantasy born of a hungry heart.

Aside from the delectable promise of a landscape of sights and pleasures, there is also the prospect of unforeseen hardships. This wilful embrace of difficulty always baffles non-bush-going people. Why rough it when you could be slurping cocktails by the resort pool? For those in the fervour of youth, seeking out adversity is accepted as another exercise of self-proving. In later decades the trials of the wild can also be a way of setting a challenge that has a chance of being met. When so many concerns of middle life—career, parenthood, mortgages—appear endless and intransigent, a spirited bushwalk is at least one credible scenario with clarity and the promise of resolution.

There is a familiar template to design this tunnel with a bright light at the end. You

grab a few willing partners, find some worthy space, build a doorway of time and stride on through. Over the years the preliminaries become second nature. All it takes is a quick squiz at some maps, a morning in the shed to rummage out gear and an hour or so raiding the supermarket for provisions.

This is more or less how I expected things would play out as I began to plan my latest departure. It began as a throw-away line to an old friend long exiled in the wastelands of suburban Melbourne. 'Peter', I declared in my bad Gandalf voice, 'the time has come for you to return to the ranges. We will walk in the autumn'.

Then, about six weeks ago, we began a round of emails and phone calls. Dates were locked down, flights booked and I roped in Peter's brother Chris as a co-conspirator. At first the correspondence was low key. Each of us imposed caveats on account of our respective gammy legs and infirmities. 'I am very unfit so something relatively gentle in terms of daily stretches would be in order', urged Peter in an email. I assured him that my physical state was equally abject and the proposed walk would, as far as possible,

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Kosciuszko's Main Range. Photo by Darren Davis.

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avoid the twin evils of speed and distance. With all this in mind I began by setting my sights low, considering several softish options—including retracing an earlier walk at a very leisurely pace.

But as the days passed these plans took on a very different shape and heft. Studying the map, my eyes roved across a mass of spaghetti-like contour swirls I hadn't seriously contemplated since Peter and I had walked in the area in our early twenties. And I began to ponder whether I really wanted to blow my best shot at a real bushwalk for more than a year on a ho-hum saunter down memory lane. Leafing through more track notes and guidebooks I found myself craving something more edgy and confronting. In a feverish hour of scheming I devised a speculative circuit taking in obscure scarps and grand, cloud-haunted knolls.

The subsequent signals from my fellow travellers seemed to chime with this more audacious, upbeat strategy. Chris had always declared his preference for routes that were exploratory, with a directional logic that gives a walk the aura of a journey. In response to my new plan he shot back an email saying, 'It's got me jumping already'. Soon after, Peter ruefully noted that it had been many years since he last carried a pack in anger and more than a decade had passed since he'd visited our chosen area. 'It just doesn't seem possible', he wrote.

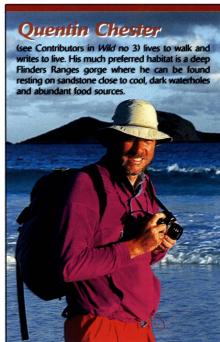
And so the die was cast. What had started as a glib notion of a walk together now had, for each of us, the credence of a personal mission. Buoyed up by this I went back to cartons of walking maps and books, still packed two years after a house move. There I chanced upon stories of treks taken; stories full of the exertion and elation that go with shouldering a load into places remote. These tales, with accompanying images of grinning walkers, filled me with irrational envy. I also trawled the Web for any stray references to our designated peak, half hoping to find some juicy scraps of information and half relieved when my searches revealed that our area remained anonymous in the thickets of cyber space.

In the final days before departure this bookish curiosity gave way to an obsession with gear. Instead of the usual shambling, last-minute round-up of food and equipment I was carried away by a boyish enthusiasm I hadn't felt for years. Soon the surfaces of my home office were layered with paraphernalia, including a shabby, blue, nylon rucksack (one shoulder-strap attached with venetian-blind cord), an odorous Dacron sleeping-bag, my trusty, blackened and battered Trangia, a sun-bleached rain jacket (zip half-detached from seam) and an ancient, brown, self-deflating mat. This motley collection looked like garage-sale rejects and since last century they had been cast aside in a cupboard, but now with plans afoot they were magically reinstated as my apparatus of freedom.

In this miscellany, no item of gear was more suggestive than a pair of red gaiters bought in Christchurch in the late 1970s and a relic of a former life in another relationship. Over the next two decades these red

nylon gaiters were an indispensable piece of armour on assorted, scrubby foot slogs in every State. Even though the instep straps were long gone and the zips had seized, they still looked sturdy enough. And despite countless hours on the track these leggings were still coated with fragrant resin from the rampant spinifex of the far northern Kimberleys. Ten years on and this lingering aroma remains powerfully redolent of a time when the simple act of going for a walk changed the way I saw the world outdoors.

Such studied reverence for equipment felt ludicrous yet irresistible. In the privacy of my office I fussed over food bags and sorted clothes into stuff sacks. And although I had ample gear for the trip, there was one more predeparture ritual to complete my triumph as a born-again bushwalker.



On the pretext of 'business' I travelled to the city and spent a morning surreptitiously touring the outdoors shops. Ignoring the endless racks of outdoors fashions and spine-tling rucksack prices, I turned my gaze to more modest trophies, in the shape of a shiny new camp-fire billy and long-bladed Swiss Army knife. Given that my outdoors career began with a tenth birthday present of a sheath knife and cooking pot, these new purchases were a neat segue to my rehabilitation and the consuming appetites of my fatter, latter-day self.

Two days before lift-off and all that remained was a final trial run. Fully loaded, my pack felt tolerably light until it dawned on me that there wasn't any water on board. Erratic rainfall makes every outing in my chosen heartlands a lurch into the unknown. There is no alternative but to totter away from the vehicle with at least five litres of water on your back. She'll be right, I thought. After all there's no point in risking a humiliating back spasm in the lounge room. And anyway, what's a few more degrees of curvature of the spine, when wild salvation is close at hand?

Through the final 48 hours I also took comfort from a low-pressure system raking south over our destination. To be sure, I got back on to the Web and looked at the Bureau of Meteorology site. As well as rainfall records there was a regular radar update of storm cells, which provided me with endless opportunities to be distracted from more pressing duties. During a phone call to Chris on the all-important question of catering, I was surprised to discover that he, too, had been on the Internet to track the promising progress of rain clouds. So I wasn't the only one working himself into a tizz of expectation.

The potential for rain brought a change of strategy on the gear front and I dug out an old pyramid-shaped fly-sheet from the gear cupboard—just in case. As it had been mothballed for many years, it seemed prudent to pitch it on the back lawn. I straightened the pegs but decided it was tempting fate to seal the seams. To do so would guarantee that there wasn't any rain for another year at least.

Lying under my shapely, double-blue pyramid and staring up into the drooling jowls of our ever-inquisitive Great Dane, I began to wonder why this particular trip had prompted such a mania of anticipation. Your first name didn't have to be Sigmund to understand that there was some heavy displacement stuff happening. On the one hand I was desperate for a break from some messy family business, the kind of situation where sadness has a viral trait that is hard to shake off. In short, it felt as though I was losing a brother and could do nothing to stop the slide.

At the same time I was shamelessly reaching out for a slice of the past. Looking through boxes of slides taken on walks in the 1980s and 1990s I was surprised by a scrawny figure wearing a big, blue rucksack, red gaiters and a wired, combative grin. I now knew too much ever to appear that confident—or that slim—again. There is, of course, no going back. But that doesn't mean you can't bring some of the vim and vigour forward.

There was a stage when bushwalking made me feel I could be whatever I wanted—no strings attached. On those earlier walks, in the company of one or the other of the brothers who were getting together again for this trip, the possibilities seemed unbounded. It was a giddy if often fretful time. Many years on and with life choices settled and strings everywhere, walking is simply one of the best ways I know of being who I've become.

Speeding down the freeway to collect Peter from the airport, it felt as though I had a gold pass to a cleaner, brighter world. Autumn light streamed into the car. Life was pared back to a tidy bundle of concerns—my rucksack, a wad of maps and the news that five wonderful millimetres of rain had fallen in the north. As I greeted Peter outside the airport terminal there was only one thing left to do. I turned to him and said: 'Let's go!' 🐾

Quentin Chester

The Getting of Wisdom

John Siseman describes his first visit to Mt Howitt and the Crosscut Saw.

Photos by the author

AS I SCRABBLED ABOUT IN THE EARLY morning by the light of a small torch, trying to fit everything into a pack that had most definitely shrunk overnight, I began to have second thoughts whether a pre-dawn start was such a good idea. The suggestion had been bandied around the camp-fire and had met with unanimous agreement as the weather had been extremely hot since the walk began. 'It will be pleasantly cool in the early morning and we will be over the

Crosscut Saw and at the Speculation camp-site by mid-morning. We can spend the afternoon walking out to the Viking and back' was the general drift of our plans.

It was Christmas 1960 and I was halfway through my first sortie into the Victorian Alps, a ten-day walk from the Crooked River, near Dargo, to Mt Cobbler and down to the Rose River. This was my introduction to the Australian High Country. I had not long arrived from the UK and I was

beginning to wonder what I had struck. Back in 'the old country' I had done a little walking (rambling) through the countryside not far from my home in London, with the aid of a detailed Ordnance Survey map. Here I was on a ten-day trip through country unknown to me, armed with a leaky tent, a cape groundsheet to ward off the rain, what I hoped would be enough food, and a map that was little more than a blank sheet with a few lines and many intriguing names.



Even more unsettling—the map indicated that there weren't any roads between the start and the finish, just meandering, dotted lines that I assumed were foot tracks.

After an uneventful journey from Melbourne by train and taxi, we had set off along the Crooked River towards the old gold town of Talbotville. This wasn't too bad as we followed an old pack-horse track close to the river. The first day set the scene for the trip—it was hot. The river, below us

now, seemed inviting but the short cut down a steep embankment was not. I lost my footing and slithered to the bottom, fortunately only losing a bit of skin and damaging my pride. After a cooling swim, it was onward to Talbotville. The old store and one or two houses were still in good condition; a small cart stood in a clearing behind the store, ready to be hitched to the horse. Here at Talbotville the postmaster, Albert Stout, and his wife lived on long

after the gold and all other residents had departed and, I am told, wrote letters to themselves in order to keep the post office open, thus guaranteeing themselves a small income.

Our way now led us along the valley of the Wongungarra River. We hadn't had any problems yet other than a serious lack of the signposts which had been present on my walks in the UK. No matter, we were young and had great confidence in our abilities, untested as they may have been. Just how untested was made clear when the easy walking in the valleys gave way to a steep climb over the Wombat Spur in the heat of the day. A thunderstorm at camp on the Humffray River that evening was decidedly welcome; my leaking tent ensured that I enjoyed the cooling rain well into the night. No doubt all would dry out on the morrow.

***'I lost my footing
and slithered to the
bottom, fortunately
only losing a bit of
skin and damaging
my pride.'***

The next day brought more hot weather and an easy stroll along the Wonnangatta valley to the site of Wonnangatta Station. Originally settled in the 1860s, the old homestead was burnt down in the late 1950s by (it is thought) walkers who left a fire burning in the hearth. In 1918 the homestead had been the site of a murder. The station manager was found shot dead, his head severed from his body and partly buried in the nearby creek. The cook, who was the only other resident at the station at the time, was immediately suspected. A search revealed little in the way of clues until, in the following spring, the body of the cook was found near Howitt Hut. The identity of the murderer or murderers was never discovered.

Just up the valley a small cemetery is the resting place for the wife and two of the children of the first manager of Wonnangatta.

Mt Howitt from Queen Spur.



gatta Station, William Bryce. The shattered headstones bear silent witness to the hardships of life in this isolated valley. If there is any place in the mountains deserving a ghost, this is surely it. Still a magical place, back in 1960 without roads or vehicles the atmosphere was quite idyllic. We pondered the tragic murders while sheltering under a tree laden with ripe cherries. In the cool of the afternoon we walked the final few kilometres to camp in the Dry River valley, where we feasted on cherries from the station orchard before we were lulled to sleep by the mournful howling of wild dogs.

Howitt Hut was our next destination and entailed a steep climb from the valley of the Dry River followed by an afternoon cooling off in the shade of the snow gums near the hut. This first visit was

hear a blustery wind blowing through the trees and sleepily wondered why the tent wasn't flapping. In the morning I found the reason—25 millimetres of fresh snow covered the landscape and it had frozen my wet, cotton tent stiff.

On this first walk we also had to dodge the thunderstorms as we made our way by trial and error across the Howitt Plains. All semblance of a track had disappeared but near the hut we did find a lone signpost pointing vaguely north towards Macalister

back then we were gazing out across a true wilderness.

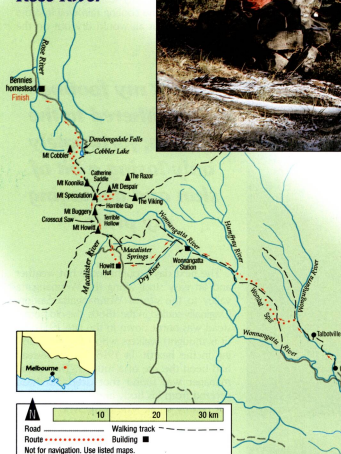
Mt Howitt was not an impressive-looking mountain when we first viewed it from the south but the views from its summit are among the best in the Victorian Alps. Those evocative names on my map came to life—the Razor, the Viking, Mt Howitt, Mt Speculation, the Terrible Hollow and the Crosscut Saw—features that were to become so well known to me in later years. Vast drifts of wild flowers adorned the slopes and the



A camp in light snow at Macalister Springs, 1963.

'...my leaking tent ensured that I enjoyed the cooling rain well into the night'.

Crooked River—Rose River



in stark contrast to another trip to Howitt Hut a year or two later. During a pleasant February weekend, I had walked across the Howitt Plains to Mt Howitt and returned to Howitt Hut in the afternoon as thunderstorms swept in from the north-west and lightning struck the high ground around me. Camping near the hut that night, I woke to

Springs. Poised on the lip of the Terrible Hollow, Macalister Springs was a very different place than it is today. There wasn't a hut, just a small, grassy clearing under the snow gums and a scrub-bash down to the head of Macalister River for water. Although the view from the escarpment above the camp-site was much the same as today,

jagged teeth of the Crosscut Saw ripped across the skyline. On the horizon were the distant peaks of Mt Buffalo, Mt Bogong and the Bogong High Plains.

The rest-day was spent exploring the summit of Mt Howitt amid late snow drifts on the southern slopes. As we set off at dawn the next morning the serrated teeth

of the Crosscut Saw glowed red in the early sun. It took us considerably more time than we had estimated to walk the Crosscut Saw, climb over Mt Buggery where we posed in suitable states of exhaustion for the camera, descend through Horrible Gap and make the long climb to Mt Speculation. Consequently it was rather late when we started out for the Viking but our trusted map seemed to indicate that it was a relatively short walk. Unfortunately, our map didn't show any contours and it was with some-

back to our camp at Mt Speculation, where the next morning we were rewarded with the sight of Terrible Hollow filled by a sea of cloud spilling out through the gaps in the Crosscut Saw.

The walk was now almost at its end and we set off for Mt Cobbler not anticipating further problems. Alas, the Cobbler Plateau was to be our downfall. Losing the track in the scrub, we were forced to camp short of our destination and, as we did not know exactly where we were, we spent some time

the next morning extricating ourselves from this predicament. To our relief we eventually stumbled upon our intended camp-site at the Cobbler Swamp. Walk-

nowned. We downed many glasses of Mrs Bennie's refreshing, homemade lemonade—a fitting end to the first of many walks in the Mt Howitt region.

I often feel that I was privileged to be able to walk through the Alps before the plethora of roads entered the mountains in the 1960s but it was these very roads that enabled my weekends of exploration to continue. In the company of friends (and a trusty Volkswagen) we would drive as far as possible on a newly made road and when further progress by vehicle was impracticable, we would set out on foot—usually with very little thought of where we were headed.

Among the outstanding walks was a trip during Easter 1962 along the Bull Plain Spur to the Nobs, not far from Mt Mac-



Mr and Mrs Bennie at their homestead on Rose River.

Left, the 'Diggers Arms', Talbotville, Crooked River.

Top left, a buggy in Talbotville.

what shattered knees that we emerged from the steep descent to the Catherine Saddle, then a wild and remote place.

Our humour did not improve in the scrub over the summit of Mt Despair and it was with some relief that we noticed a tree with an arrow blazed in its trunk. Perhaps we were on the right track, except that the arrow pointed straight up the trunk of the tree, leaving some doubt as to the way we were intended to go. Maybe it meant that we should climb the tree for a better view of the country ahead but it was becoming obvious that we were not to reach the Viking on this occasion. Reluctantly, we turned

ing over the Cobbler Plateau today, I wonder how we managed to lose ourselves but I suspect it had something to do with our map. Surely it could not have been inexperienced!

Leaving Cobbler Swamp the next morning, after climbing Mt Cobbler we lost the track yet again; instead we pioneered a new route to the Dandongadale Falls, which were little more than a trickle after all the hot weather. Further soul-searching and reference to our now much-maligned map finally brought us to Bennies' homestead on Rose River. Here we enjoyed the bush hospitality for which Mr and Mrs Bennie were re-

Donald, where the water-supply had dried up. Reluctant to descend to the river, we opted instead to walk to Mt Clear where we believed there was a spring below the summit. Some time was wasted searching for the elusive spring; our efforts revealed some soggy moss which was eagerly wrung out for what moisture it contained. While hunting under the steep bluffs, we observed with apprehension as our companion in the lead staggered backwards grasping a very large rock that had come unstuck as he scrambled up. He was considerate enough not to want this large piece of mountain to descend upon us, so he staggered about with

the rock in his arms until we had scrambled out of the way and it could be left to fall safely into the valley.

Some of us now continued further still—eventually we found good water at Chesters Yard. By now the day was well advanced and we had a ten kilometre walk back to camp along a trackless ridge and in the dark. We made it back to Mt Clear in time to watch the Easter moon rise but the situation became even more interesting. The Great Dividing Range traverses High Cone and Square Top *en route* from Mt Clear to the Nobs; both obstacles are high protuberances with false spurs. There was virtually no track and beneath the canopy of snow

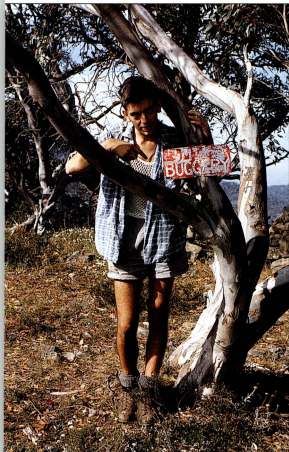
continued to the slightly lower western summit of Mt MacDonald where we began our descent.

Had a modern map been available to us we may have reconsidered our actions. We started down only to discover that the cliff we had hoped to avoid was hiding in the forest. Little was to be gained by turning back

that I am still alive and well is testament that this philosophy must be correct.



While it is still possible to walk the routes described, unfortunately much of the way is now along vehicle tracks. Early summer is the best time to walk and you may be pleas-



Bugged on Mt Buggery?

gums even a full moon did little to light our way. Needless to say, we had neglected to bring a torch!

We staggered into camp around midnight and fell exhausted into our tents. The late start next morning which was the consequence of this little fiasco created further problems. We set off for Mt MacDonald, looking forward to an easier day. All went well at first but the summit brought with it dissent among the party. The younger half of the group, myself included, favoured the direct route from the highest of the three summits straight down to the Jamieson River. Older and wiser members pointed out that a cliff barred the descent. Our reply was to the effect that although the cliff on the map was obvious, we thought it of little import. However, the wiser group prevailed and we



Early morning on the Crosscut Saw.

ed to learn that modern maps take out much of the guesswork of 40 years ago. For more information, refer to the 1:50 000 Vicmap Crooked River–Sieve, Tamboritha–Moroka and Howitt–Selwyn sheets. Further information can be found in *Victoria's Alpine National Park—A Bushwalker's Guide* by John Siseman. Camp-sites are plentiful and finding water should not be too difficult. 📍

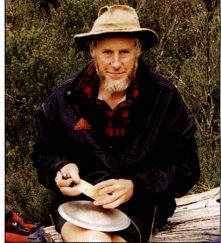


The Wonnangatta Station graveyard.

so we plunged over the cliff and into the forest below. I can't remember much more detail than an uncomfortable night spent wedged between two fallen trees while others tried to camp on a lyre-bird mound. We didn't know where we were, only that we had to continue downward next morning to the Jamieson River. From this exercise I learned not to place too much faith in the ministrations of the older and wiser but to charge on in and hope for the best. The fact

John Siseman

Born in London, John Siseman has explored the high mountains of Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales since arriving in Australia in the late 1950s. The knowledge thus gained has proliferated into a number of useful bushwalking guides. He has trekked in the Himalayas between bouts of employment in a Melbourne gear shop.



Peak Bagging

The highs and lows of summit fever, by **Andrew Hughes**

A MISCHIEVOUS RUMOUR IS IN CIRCULATION that bushwalking is a path to self-discovery and spiritual awareness. The notion that walking is a form of escapist recreation devoid of the usual tribulations of life is similarly erroneous: it is merely another rough-and-tumble form of one-upmanship, chest beating and bragging. As with all seemingly innocent activities, the human competitive urge cannot be denied.

'Oh no, you're mistaken, we went to the summit for the view.'

Hogwash! The view is just a pleasant dividend of the more primitive urge to conquer, dominate and succeed.

'No, no, no, we are as one with nature. For us it's about the journey rather than the destination.'

Spare me, please. The grunting Tarzan as he swung through trees and conversed amiably with baboons was at one with nature; we unfortunately severed our ties long ago. Battle, struggle, fight—that is our relationship with nature.

'Alright then, Mr Know-it-all, give me an example.'

I offer you the ancient and honourable pursuit of peak bagging. Roughly translated it means 'standing proudly on many mountain tops and peering down on the rest of humankind'. The term is borrowed from local bushwalking clubs but it's a worldwide phenomenon wherever people and mountains coexist. It is pure, undiluted human nature. It is the vehicle that transforms the peaceful weekend trip into a frenzied, grasping battle for merit.

The principle of peak bagging is absurdly simple; find a mountain, walk to its base

and climb. Repeat this process over a number of days, months and years until you are satisfied that your 'bag' of peaks is greater than your peers' collections. To increase the complexity each summit is rated on a scale according to difficulty. The main rating criteria are the accessibility of the peak and the difficulty of its ascent. Additional points may be awarded for extra efforts such as speed and persistence in inclement weather (distant rain and a freshening breeze don't count). Bonuses are not offered for feeling a bit knackered, and summit failure is scorned. Ideally you should compile your ratings system with a group of like-minded friends. Every spare weekend and holiday you can strive to outdo each other. The camaraderie generated by this intense competition is admirable and the feeling when you finally emerge at the top of the heap is sublime. If everyone commits to these guidelines, the notion that there are no losers in bushwalking can finally be buried.

That's the theory, so let's get serious about the practical side of bagging many peaks in great haste. The more and the hastier the better. Let's travel to the isle of the apple, the poppy and the potato: Tasmania. It is an exquisite, open-air smorgasbord of mountain delights that are, for the most part, attainable by the average rabid bushwalker.

The following four regions are best visited by walking in and pitching a base camp for two to five days, then walking back out along the same route. Not burdened with a pack, the days in between are perfect for dashing madly about between mountain peaks and grinding your knees into jelly. The Western

Arthurs walk is a circuit so you'll have to hump your pack all the way. Of course, for all the walks the usual precautions apply; be warm, waterproof and prepared for the worst. Pack light and walk fast.

The following information is sparse so if you are planning to walk in these areas you'll need detailed topographic maps and fuller route specifics. Some of the access details have been omitted to comply with the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service (PWS) policy on publicity and promotion of bushwalking within World Heritage Areas. Use this article as the spark to get your peak-bagging juices flowing—the combinations and permutations are endless. Awaken the hungry beast of challenge in your soul and make your next bushwalk count on the scoreboard of life's experiences.

Arm River to Pelion Plains

Most people arrive at Pelion after a number of days spent walking the Overland Track. It is roughly in the middle of the National Park but there is another way to get there. The Arm River Track which darts in from the side at Lake Rowallan has long been a popular weekend trip and is an ideal starting-point for alternative Cradle Mountain—

The boys are already looking for the next peak. Mt Orion on the Western Arthurs is an easy climb from the main traverse and well worth the effort. Hughes



Lake St Clair adventures. Give your legs a good stretch in the car park because the first task is a steep climb out of the Mersey valley. After that it's easy going to the first target, Mt Pillinger. A small mountain with a ramping easterly aspect and cliffines to the west, climb it by following a rough route through eucalypt forest to the summit. There isn't any real rock scrambling required and the panorama from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair is one of the finest in the region.

Rejoin the main track and continue to Pelion Plains. The total time to walk from the car park to Pelion is between two and

At a glance

Length:	Three to four days
Peaks:	Five
Grade:	Medium
Considerations:	Well-used tracks, may be crowded in the summer walking season.

Pine Valley

Jump on the boat at Cynthia Bay, Lake St Clair, and head towards the clutch of peaks surrounding Pine Valley. From Narcissus Hut follow the Overland Track north to its junction

the rock's tell-tale columns. The Acropolis has excellent examples of these columns, exposed by the savage weather and left standing as needles of rock. A beautiful sight but secondary to the aim of reaching the summit, so don't linger too long in wonder. Ascend, descend, sleep. That is the peak bagger's mantra and you'll do well to remember it as you return to Pine Valley Hut.

On the other side of the valley is the Du Cane Range and behind it is the Labyrinth. Another steep climb out of the valley on a well-marked track is required. Climb the Parthenon from the track at the edge of the

'It is the vehicle that transforms the peaceful weekend trip into a frenzied, grasping battle for merit.'

undulating plateau for a gorgeous view of the murky northern reaches of Pine Valley. Mysterious creatures with eerie mating calls undoubtedly live down there so be glad of your elevated position. Perhaps that's part of the comfort of peak bagging—the total separation from dark, scary places.

There are many options when you reach the Labyrinth but the real prize is Mt Geryon. Follow the track up the plateau to the head

Anathema to the peak bagger! A relaxing scene in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park. Grant Dixon

four hours plus the time on Mt Pillinger. Pelion Hut and the surrounding camp-site are popular in summer with traffic on the Overland Track but there should be ample space.

Mt Ossa demands your attention on day two. Follow the Overland Track south to the saddle of Pelion Gap and pause briefly before turning off at the signpost for the ascent. Mt Ossa is Tasmania's highest peak, which has extra significance, so reward yourself with a couple of minutes on top. The true summit is on a steep little dolerite pillar and for full points you'll have to scramble on to it. On the return journey to the main track, detour slightly and walk over Mt Doris. It's really just a hill but if they want to call it a mountain it's fair game for the peak bagger.

Back at the junction you can see the impressive nipple of Mt Pelion East—your next summit. That's three peaks in one day and only the truly gluttonous could ask for more. Head back down to Pelion Hut for that big steak you stashed in the dim recesses of your pack.

As an easy, third-day side-trip or as part of the walk out, climb Mt Oakleigh. The track leading over the Pelion Plains is well trodden and the final, steep climb is worth the effort.



An excellent example of 'summit pose' syndrome. Looking from the Acropolis to Mt Geryon. Hughes

with the Pine Valley track. Pine Valley Hut and surrounding camp-sites are the launching pad for a mountain frenzy of epic proportions.

The Acropolis is a block of rock carved into the eastern side of the valley. When the magma cooled beneath the earth's surface into dolerite it created the pattern that forms

of Pine Valley. Maintain altitude as you walk around the cirque to Mt Geryon. The final climb is not for the faint-hearted—the more than 300 metre drop to one side is frequently visible. Return the way you came to Pine Valley. Other mountains near the Labyrinth are Mt Hyperion, Mt Eros and Walled Mountain.

*Peak bagging in the Western
Arthurs. Dixon*



The Day I Climbed Mt Ossa

A family expedition to Tasmania's highest peak, by Sheila Spargo

'MUM', SAID MY YOUNGEST SON, 'YOU look forty but Dad only looks twenty'. Stung by this unsolicited opinion from my nearest and (up to that moment) dearest, I glared at my husband whose expression had become insufferably smug.

Twenty! Huh! In a pig's eye! But I had to admit that he did look lean and fit. It must have been all that bushwalking he'd been doing while I was at home nurturing these vipers in my bosom. But I wasn't fat, just...um...voluptuous. Yes, that was the word for me—voluptuous—like Marilyn Monroe or Sophia Loren! Well, just a bit, maybe.

So with indignant pride I joined the Hobart Walking Club, where it soon became apparent that, though born under the sign of Capricorn, I would never be mistaken for a mountain goat, even an old, fat one. But how better to spend one's leisure time than walking with interesting companions through some of the world's most beautiful country?

Then, suddenly it seemed, I turned fifty. This was serious. My son frowned.

'Mother', he said, 'you should climb Mt Ossa'.

'Mt what?'

'Veg!' Somehow I guessed this was the current term for someone of low intellect.

'Mt Ossa is Tasmania's highest peak.'

I gaped.

'It's easy!' he assured me. 'I've done it in an hour.'

I could feel my eyes going slitty. What lay behind this sinister suggestion? Did he think I needed upgrading—trading in for a younger model? I made a rash decision.

'All right, if you and Dad carry the tents and do the cooking, I'll go.'

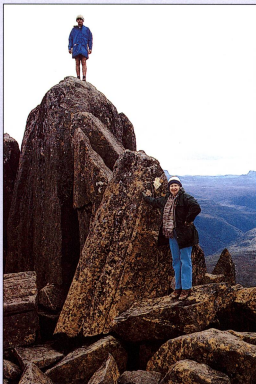
'Okay.' I couldn't believe it. A 17-year-old offering to take his mother on a camping trip? I was touched by the sentiment. I was also trapped.

So that was how I found myself plodding up the Wolfram Mines Track, moaning quietly to myself beneath a giant pack. If my granny could see me now! Surely this would be high on her list of Things an Educated Person Should Not Do. I loved my granny. There were many horrible activities on her list from which I was absolved while growing up. Granny would have ensured that I was equipped with at least half a dozen porters instead of being forced to slum it with two.

In summer Pelion camp-site is a popular overnight stop on the Overland Track from Lake St Clair to Cradle Mountain, but we found a good spot for our tents. What bliss it was to discard my pack while my efficient

slaves put up the tents and prepared the meal. In the twilight gloom we watched a large wombat making its way purposefully to the creek for a drink. This is the life!

The camp-site slumbered beneath a primeval sky. Weary walkers snuggled into their sleeping-bags. All was still except for a possum chomping on someone's carelessly stored rations.



Nick Spargo and the author on the summit of Mt Ossa. Trevor Spargo

Suddenly a screech broke the silence. I had discovered that I was sharing my sleeping-bag with a fat, juicy leech. My husband, inured to such displays, merely grunted unfeelingly, not attempting a rescue. Hurling my inner sheet and the leech out into the night, I subsided sulkily. Was gallantry dead? Apparently it was. Along with the image of me as a hardy bushwalker.

Next morning I put on my most severe Edmund Hillary expression to let other campers know that any caterwauling during the night had not come from me. After breakfast we prepared to conquer Mt Ossa.

Suppressing my foreboding, I followed the two lean figures into the forest. I tried to explain to myself how I, a voluptuous 50-year-old, had arrived at this point. I failed.

The air of Tasmania's highlands has a magical quality. It absorbs sound, enfolding

you in silence, increasing your awareness of the call of currawongs, the regular thud of boots on a rocky track, the steady beat of your heart, the puffing of breath.

We emerged from the forest beneath Mt Pelion East. As the weather had been dry this sometimes boggy section of track was passable.

I paused on the flanks of Mt Doris, ostensibly to admire an exquisite alpine garden with clumps of strange cushion plants clustered around small rock pools. My ploy was unsuccessful. I was advised to get a move on if I wanted to reach Mt Ossa before nightfall.

The higher we climbed, the groggier I felt—what had they done with the oxygen? I had little sympathy for my son, who complained that walking so slowly made him tired. This expedition was his idea and I was his foolhardy victim. Let him wait.

The boulders grew larger and the track more precipitous. I'm rockclimbing, I told myself excitedly, feeling more like Hillary than ever. I crawled over a ridge into the freezing wind, my energy levels sinking towards zero.

'Lunch', decreed my husband. Huddling into every item of clothing in my pack, I sprawled exhausted, gazing wistfully at the summit only a short distance away. In my enfeebled state it seemed unattainable. A descending party eyed me curiously. Sulkily, I stared back. Once rested and fed, my

'...it soon became apparent that, though born under the sign of Capricorn, I would never be mistaken for a mountain goat, even an old, fat one'.

perception of the final climb had changed and I knew I could do it.

The thrill of standing on the summit is still with me. Valiant walkers who have scaled Federation Peak, trudged the South Coast Track or traversed the Arthur Ranges might have some slight inkling of the way I felt the day I climbed Mt Ossa. 🐾

For the past 30 years Sheila Spargo has enjoyed many walks in Tasmania's superb National Parks including coastal, alpine and rainforest areas. The tracks, waterfalls and vegetation of the Wellington Range are on her doorstep.

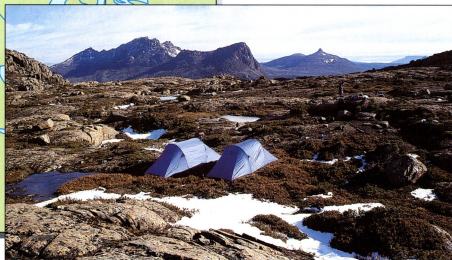
Length:	Three to five days
Peaks:	Three
Grade:	Medium
Considerations:	Long day-trips so be sure to take waterproofs, first aid and other necessities.

Just east of the famous Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park is the Walls of Jerusalem National Park. The park is a spectacular introduction to Tassie walking. Park near the Pools of Bethesda. Walk round Solomons

Length:	Three to four days
Peaks:	Six
Grade:	Easy
Considerations:	This is a fragile area so tread lightly. Check with the PWS for area restrictions or track closures before you set off.

The Western Arthur Range is a string of pearls atop a pile of riches in the jewellery

Nearly 20 recognised peaks protrude in less than 20 kilometres of peak-bagging heaven. Beginning with Mt Hesperus and finishing at the West Portal, nothing in Australia compares to the Western Arthurs. The track is fragile and the already careful management is likely to be tightened further in the future. Every sharp rise of the range is balanced by an equal fall. The nature of gravity means that your body will work very hard for every

[illegible]

Jewels and through Herods Gate and you'll be in the 'Walls'. King Davids Peak sits atop the West Wall, Mt Jerusalem on the East Wall, and the Temple in the middle. South through Damascus Vale are the Wailing Wall and Mt Moriah. Add to that Mt Ophel and little Zion Hill and you can see what a bag of goodies we have here—all within four square kilometres. By camping at the Pool of Bethesda and making day-trips you will be

Length:	Seven to ten days
Peaks:	Innumerable
Grade:	Hard
Considerations:	Retreat from the range is limited to several moraines so be prepared to sit out bad weather.

So there it is, the know-how and the where-how. All that's left is the do-how. Next time you're faced with a choice between sleeping in and rising before dawn in a bold attempt to bash through a scrubby valley to climb that insignificant peak, you'll know the right thing to do. Society needs more peak baggers—join us. 🏔️

A man with short brown hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt and a large blue backpack, stands on a rocky, uneven terrain. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background shows a steep, rocky cliffside and a body of water under a clear sky.

divides his time between his Tasmanian-based guiding business and devising new ways to hibernate for winter. When he's not walking Andrew enjoys BBCs, watching footy with the lads and fine Tasmanian beers.

Australia's Deepest Caves

The quest for the best, by Stephen Bunton

I FIRST TRAVELLED TO TASMANIA IN 1977 TO VISIT Exit Cave and the bottom of Khazad-dum (KD).

My aim was to explore Australia's longest and deepest caves during an Easter weekend. At the time, Tasmania was known as the apple isle. Now it's called the holiday isle (and, cynically, the wood-chip isle) but really it should be referred to as the caving State as it contains Australia's deepest and best sporting caves. Just as Tasmania's marketing names have been superseded, so too have the lengths and depths of its caves, as new caves have been discovered and older ones extended.

Sad to say, Exit Cave was surpassed as Australia's longest when Jenolan Caves in New South Wales were systematically surveyed. Jenolan has since been overtaken by Bullitt Cave in the Northern Territory (see *Wild* no 71). However, it is extremely unlikely that anyone visiting a long cave would travel through every explored or surveyed passage. A more realistic objective is to reach the bottom of a deep cave as it provides a more tangible objective—rather like reaching the summit of a mountain.

Khazad-dum is a true deep cave with 13 pitches that require 168 metres of rope and single rope techniques (SRT). A trip into KD stretched the capabilities of three novices from Sydney—it was a quantum leap from the deep caves of Bungonia, NSW, the mainland's major vertical area. At present, the deepest cave on the mainland is the Jenolan system (180 metres, see *Wild* no 71).

Deep caves are measured by the difference between the highest point and the lowest point in the system which, in many cases, may have been visited only by divers. Although this is the accepted manner by which the depth of a cave is measured, it doesn't necessarily prove the true depth of a cave. If the cave contains a sequence of roped pitches, as do most of the caves in Tasmania that have active streamways, the caver will be rewarded with a satisfying sense of depth. Streamways add considerable aesthetic appeal as they have clean-washed passages and waterfall pitches but they include the compounding dangers of saturation and hypothermia.

sassafras and leatherwood, I am transported back to that night and my initiation to the deep caves of Tasmania.

In the same way as Exit Cave has been superseded in length, KD is no longer the deepest cave in Australia. Since then I have harboured an undiminished desire to reach the bottom of Australia's deepest cave. I have been on a constant mission to bottom each newly titled 'deepest cave', to 'knock the bastards off' as soon as I can!

The first significantly deep cave in Australia was Growling Swallet. In 1957 its depth to the first sump was measured at -171 metres. Growling Swallet is Australia's largest stream sink; a sizeable river that flows into a gaping hole in a cliff surrounded by the rainforest. The river reappears 9.4 kilometres away at the Junece Resurgence, near the town of Maydena. Eight kilometres of unknown passage remained between the two caves. Today a trip into Growling Swallet is more than 14 kilometres long but it is an endurance epic and those attempting it play Russian roulette with the weather. During the 1980s and 1990s a string of rescues took place when cavers were flooded in beyond the sumps as cold fronts fuelled by the roaring forties sped in at an unpredictable rate. Ironically, this high rainfall and the peaks of South-west Tasmania have created the deep caves.

In the 1960s the bottoms of Tasmania's deep caves were reached with lightweight electron ladders. Cavers were belayed down and up each pitch—a mammoth logistic exercise and an extraordinary team effort. A belayer has to sit at the top of each pitch, sometimes for hours, in the cold, dark damp. Just carrying the mountain of gear to the cave was an epic and some of the 'Sherpas' never made it underground. It was the style of operation that took the astronauts to the moon.

Allan Kellar was the sole 'astronaut' who touched down at the bottom of Midnight Hole in 1968 while his mates waited patiently at each pitch head. Earlier he was on the first trip to the bottom of Mini Martin: the exploration toppled Growling Swallet

Keith Horton wearing the ubiquitous woollen jacket (now almost extinct!) abseiling Midnight Hole in 1979. Bunton

After more than 12 hours underground on that long-ago trip, having abseiled the 13 pitches to the bottom of KD, we prusiked out against the force of water on the six streamway pitches. Finally we emerged; satisfied and stuffed. With failing torches we stumbled through the rainforest for the one-hour walk back to the car, often losing the track. One of my most vivid memories is the smell of the trees in the mist and the drizzle; our senses were heightened by the experience. I now live in Tasmania and whenever my nostrils are filled with the scent of



from the head of the 'deepest caves' list. Mini Martin joins Exit Cave and was discovered as a daylight hole from the inside. Of the three cavers who laddered down Mini Martin, only Allan Kellar climbed back up the 170 metres of ladder; the others preferred to walk out as a through-trip. Their belayer had to rockclimb the 110 metre

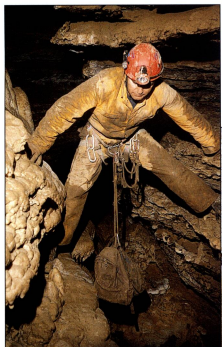
Wailes said: 'Good. No one knows about us. So they won't come down here and find all our caves!'

Wailes's main project at the time was the mapping of Growling Swallet. However, high on the hill above Growling Swallet were other streams disappearing into the limestone. These were systematically investigated, which led to two great discoveries in the area—Serendipity and Ice Tube.

The exploration of Serendipity entailed following an awkward, narrow passage known as Castigation Crawl before the continuation of the vertical series. The uphill return journey with full rope-packs was an epic that exhausted both the cavers and their vocabulary. Eventually the cave was pushed

them. The cave pushed the boundaries of technical rigging and stamina. It was not surprising that one of the pitches is called Degenerated Man. This name epitomises the appearance of the first team after they finally emerged in the early hours of a winter morning in 1982. It was hard to tell whether or not they'd been caving or were coated in mud from jungle warfare. Only the shivering and chattering of teeth indicated that they were suffering hypothermia, not shell-shock.

The exploration of Growling Swallet was also a primary focus and many of the party were used to long trips to the far end of a cave. One of the side passages in the nether regions of Growling Swallet is Mothers Passage, which follows a small inlet upstream to a rift that looks very much like the bottom of Ice Tube. After much searching, the connection was discovered from the Growling Swallet end. I took part in the first through trip in canyoning style (see *Wild*



Not for the faint-hearted. Darren Brooks and tackle bag traverse without a belay, above an 85 metre pitch, on rotten and muddy rock in Niggly Cave. Right, old technology—the electron ladder. Phil Hull struggles with the mud in Threefortyone. Bunton

entrance pitch! Several years later it was KD that would yield to the electron ladder, rope and altruistic belayer.

SRT changed all that and caves such as KD became sporting test-pieces. Groups of Sydney cavers attempted the deepest three caves: KD, Cauldron Pot and Tassy Pot on consecutive days. At the bottom of KD they managed to extend it slightly. For the locals, caving was about exploration, and no group achieved as much as those active in the early 1980s.

This generation of Tasmanian cavers included the notable core of Rolan and Stefan Eberhard, Nick Hume and expatriate British caver Trevor Wailes. Contrary to the local feeling of disappointment when Tasmania was left off the map at the opening ceremony of the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games,



to an extensive stream passage, which then extends furthest in the upstream direction and almost regains the surface near the track to the start of the cave. The whole system was like a mini Growling Swallet—it had almost three kilometres of passage to a depth of -278 metres.

The other cave of this time, Ice Tube, taxed cavers' resources most of all. The aptly named Ice Tube is vertical from the entrance to the bottom and it is cold. There is hardly a place to stand between the 11 medium-length pitches and water cascades down each of

'...whenever my nostrils are filled with the scent of sassafras and leatherwood, I am transported back to that night and my initiation to the deep caves of Tasmania'.

no 13). I still remember the sobriety of the party when we pulled down the first rope and committed ourselves to such a cold and forbidding cave. I took

extra food for what could have been a long wait for the rescue party. No one in the party had negotiated the narrow rift into Mothers Passage and we trusted the accuracy of the survey implicitly.

An even more committed first through trip into Growling Swallet was from Pendant Pot, which was made solo by Rolan Eberhard including the 15 metre sump dive at the bottom of Pendant Pot (see *Wild* no 14). The less serious Slaughterhouse Pot has become a moderate beginners' through trip with four abseils.

Then came a break in the exploration of caves in the Florentine. Growling Swallet was so big and the trips were so long that no one ever seemed likely to view the end of it. Growling Swallet was as deep as it was likely to be for a while until Nick Hume

dived to a depth of 15 metres in a sump called Coelacanth and slightly increased the overall depth of the cave.

In the meantime Hume and the Eberhards turned to the dolomite karst on the north-east ridge of Mt Anne. This area had

some good finds from the 1960s including Kellar Cellar, and the 115 metre entrance pitch was the longest pitch in Tasmania and Australia at the time. Exploration turned to Anne-A-Kananda. Kananda, which means 'stone house', is a name adapted from the

Australia's 20 Deepest Caves

Rank	Cave	Depth, metres	First bottomed #	Year	Comments
1	Niggly Cave	371	Rolan and Stefan Eberhard	1990	Downstream rock pile pushed by Vera Wong and Stefan Eberhard
		375*	Judy Clarke, Rolan Eberhard	1993	
2	Anne-A-Kananda	90	Brian Collin, John Marshall	1966	To the bottom of the doline
		373*	Rolan and Stefan Eberhard, Richard Hortle, Trevor Wailes	1982	
3	Ice Tube— Growling Swallet	171*	Ron Adams, Albert Goede, Del Latham, Jim Poynter, John Wanless	1957	To Sump 1
		176*	Stuart Nicholas, Peter Shaw	1976	Pushed Sump 1 during dry conditions
		354*	Rolan Eberhard, Malcolm Handel, Nick Hume, Mike Martyn, Trevor Wailes	1982	To the bottom of Ice Tube
		360	Nick Hume	1985	Diving 15 metres in Coelacanth
4	Splash Pot	99	Ron Ackhurst, Stuart Nicholas, Peter Shaw	1973	Stopped at a squeeze
		120	Rolan Eberhard, Trevor Wailes	1987	Pushed the Close to the Bone squeeze
		306	Jeff Butt, Jol Desmarchelier, Andras Galambos, Dave Rasch	2000	
5	Cauldron Pot	60	Laimonis Kavalieris, Philip Robinson, John Taylor	1972	Discovered Bills Bypass Extended beyond the Au Cheval pitch
		263	Laimonis Kavalieris, Philip Robinson, Peter Shaw	1972	
		305	Stefan Eberhard, Nick Hume, Dean Morgan	1989	
6	Khazad-dum— Dwarrowdelf	274*	Chris Harris, Philip Robinson	1972	To Sump 1
		275*	Neil Hickson, Randall King, Roger Lewis, Stuart McCann, Dave Martin, Peter Ruxton, Peter Winglee	1976	Discovered the Depths of Moria
		285*	Phil Hill	1987	Diving in Sump 1
7	Serendipity	276	Andrew Briggs, Rolan and Stefan Eberhard, Nick Hume, Trevor Wailes	1981	
8	Rift Cave— Threefortyone	130*	Frank Brown, Ken Iredeale, David Steane	1947	Rift Cave
		180	Helen Beggs, Jeff Butt, Russell Fulton, Lyndsay Hicks	1988	Extension to Rift Cave
		148	John Briggs, Tim Rudman, Gordon Taylor	1979	Threefortyone
		249	Jeff Butt, Dave Rasch	1994	Depth after the caves were connected
9	Tassy Pot	70	Peter Brabon, Brian Collin	1968	After the Glory Hole was discovered Horizontal extension to Morod Passage
		238*	Arthur Clarke, John Morley, Philip Robinson	1970	
		238	Bryan Cleaver, Jeff Crass, Ivan Desailly	1981	
10	Arrakis	235	Jeff Butt, Steve Campkin, Phil Jackson, Andrew McNeill	1985	
11	Niagra Pot	149	Dave Cripps, Stuart Nicholas, Lance Rutherford, Peter Shaw	1972	
		230	Nick Hawkes, Dean and Stuart Morgan	1989	
12	Owl Pot	244	Leigh Gleeson, Steve Harris, Peter Maquillan, Aleks Terauds, Lyndsay Wilson	1980	
13	Mini Martin—Exit Cave	220*	Allan Kellar, John Marshall	1967	Made the first through trip, walking out Exit Cave
14	Milk Run	208	Arthur Clarke, Tom Porrit	1985	
15	Sesame Caves	207	Karen Dedenczuk, Leigh Gleeson, Chris Harris, John Ward	1972	Unsurveyed
		unknown	James Davis, Rolan Eberhard	1975	
16	Flick Mints Hole	60	Chris Davies, Mike Edwards, Mick Flint, Alec Marr	1984	Formerly known as Florentine Pot
		204	Martyn Carnes, Rolan and Stefan Eberhard, Nick Hume	1985	
17	Midnight Hole	203	Allan Kellar	1968	To Matchbox Squeeze
18	Porcupine Pot	60	Martyn Carnes, Rolan and Stefan Eberhard, Alec Marr, Trevor Wailes	1984	
		202	Stephen Bunton, Rolan Eberhard, Nick Hume, Trevor Wailes	1985	
19	The Chaiman	160	Andrew Davey, Leigh Gleeson, Mike Johnston, Stuart Nicholas, Derek Shields	1976	To the streamway
		197	Tony White	1981	Furthest penetration downstream
20	Big Tree Pot	190	John Briggs, Tim Rudman, Gordon Taylor	1979	

* Denotes Australia's deepest cave at the time.

While this table contains the names of most of the caves active during any particular time, there are some notable caves who for some reason or other never made it to the bottom of a deep cave on the first trip. It must be emphasised that caving is a group activity and exploration success depends upon a team of people. This table unfortunately does not recognise the numerous surface troglers, porters, belayers, surveyors and map makers whose efforts may have led to discoveries. This table merely mentions the people who first arrived at a given depth. In many cases the depth was not known until a surveying party visited the area.

All caves in Tasmania.

long caves explored in Papua New Guinea on the Atea 78 and Muller 82 caving expeditions in which many of us participated (see *Wild* no 8). Exploration yielded another deep cave but not without some controversy. Stefan Eberhard stumbled across the cave's insignificant entrance just behind camp and the party gradually explored the confusing series of rifts and breakdown chambers in the cave. Word of the exploration leaked out and a party from Launceston came down for a pirate trip—they reached a depth of 300 metres in the Desicator Series of the cave. The Hobart-based cavers returned at Easter to break the new record. Surprisingly, Tasmania's north-south rivalry was soon forgotten rather than fuelled by this incident.

It was possible to reach the true bottom of the cave by two routes including the long pitches Priority Paid (100 metres) or Heartbeat (118 metres). Dave Gilliat and I reached the bottom of the Desicator Series in 1983 although we did not survey it (see *Wild* no 16). The long pitches were a breakthrough. Formerly Tasmania's caves seemed to have only one long pitch, which was often at the surface. Caves with long pitches in the depths were a new and greater challenge. It was a challenge to be reissued in the Florentine.

Hume and Leigh Douglas, along with a few other Tasmanian Caverneering Club members, checked stream sinks on the western slopes of Mt Field and finally located Niggly Cave. The cave had a long, tight entrance series and a vertical section that included long pitches in the style of Anne-A-Kananda. When the cave finally started to go vertical it disappeared down an 85 metre pitch and eventually down another pitch of 103 metres.

One way to avoid the water flowing down a pitch is to traverse the pitch head and to pause with one foot on each wall as you look for a good place to descend. In Niggly the rock atop the 85 metre pitch is rotten—sloping across the top of such a shaft is not for the faint-hearted. At the far side exploration revealed an older series of pitches into a high-roofed chamber with a plug of rocks that make a giant false floor. It is like entering an enormous rocket silo through some tiny side door: launching off the side of these house-sized boulders is the Black Supergiant Shaft, now Australia's longest at 191 metres (see the photo in *Wild* no 59). It took me 45 minutes to abseil due to rope weight and about an hour to prusik it with Rolan Eberhard. I must admit that I trained for months on a home-made prusik machine in the workshop before tackling the pitch.

It is fitting that Australia's deepest cave has Australia's longest pitch. I'd have been disappointed if it hadn't but bottoming Niggly is not just a matter of yo-yoing the Black Supergiant Shaft. Beyond the bottom chamber, where the waterfall cascades down the 103 metre pitch, the cave continues

through a boulder pile and an exhausting two kilometres downstream to its end. I accompanied Rolan to this point in one of his many attempts to overcome this final obstacle without success. I was tired when I arrived yet I knew that we had only reached the halfway point. It was the forefront of exploration but, alas, it didn't yield. When we turned back I was not quite prepared for the outward journey, uphill, upstream, knee-deep, into the wind and over huge sandbanks which attest to the scariness of floods in the area.



Khazad-dum the wet way. Abseiling one of the entrance streamway pitches. Nick Hume

It was by following the airflows above Sump 1 in Growling Swallet (now known as Windy Rift) that the kilometres of passage beyond were discovered. The end of Growling Swallet is a mere 300 metres from the upstream end of Niggly Cave. From the downstream end of Niggly to the upstream known limits of June Cave—an elusive gap on the map—is now as little as four kilometres. At present we know where the water flows but where does that breeze go?

Recent exploration has returned to the slopes above June Cave. The resurveying of many old caves has led to the discovery of new passages and added significantly to the depth of these caves. The evocatively named Cauldron Pot and Niagara Pot have both been extended. Rift Cave was linked with Threefortyone and Splash Pot has been pushed to a depth of 306 metres.

Splash Pot is the newest and meanest of Tasmania's deep caves. At about 120 metres it closes to a horribly tight 21 centimetre rift

called Close to the Bone. Negotiating this section takes an hour each way as you wrestle a tackle bag. Beyond is a 113 metre pitch Harrow the Marrow, which takes the cave to its plumbed depth. At present it is Australia's fourth deepest cave (see *Wild* no 78). It is a place few cavers have visited and it's unlikely that many more ever will.

Splash Pot is close to KD; in fact the two caves intertwine as they delve deep into the earth. Despite the most concerted efforts from both sides, a connection has proved elusive. They are separated by only 11 metres at their closest point. Jeff Butt has been coordinating surveys of the most recent discoveries. In the process of resurveying Dwarrowdelf, which connects into the final chamber of KD, Butt discovered a 20-year-old surveying error. Unfortunately, this reduced the depth of KD from 323 metres to 285 metres. KD was therefore only just Australia's deepest cave when I first bottomed it in 1972. Nevertheless it remains my favourite and will probably be a popular destination for mainland sport cavers for generations to come.

On a world scale, the caves of Tasmania fall well short of the mile-deep mark (1.6 kilometres). The world's deepest is now Veronja Cave in the Caucasus Mountains in the Republic of Georgia at 1710 metres. In 1973 when I began my deep-caving career 11 caves were deeper than a kilometre; now there are more than 70! These have been explored by the masses of cavers in more populous parts of the world or they have succumbed to serious expeditions that last for months and may exhaust every lead over years of return visits. In comparison, Tasmania's caves have been

Stephen Buntton

(See Contributors in *Wild* no 6) is a caver and climber of 30 years' experience. He has travelled extensively throughout Australia and overseas to undertake these pursuits and he moved to Tasmania in 1986 to bag as many deep caves as possible. Recently he has been sidetracked by peak-bagging bushwalks and family beach days.



explored by a handful of cavers, in many cases the same handful of cavers as on weekend trips for the past 40 years. For pure sporting interest, intriguing hydrology and great exploration potential they are as good as anything elsewhere and with plenty still to find. 📡

NEW ZEALAND WALKING

Doing the Dusky

Jamie Davidson tackles the wildest—and certainly the wettest—of Fiordland's major tracks



'PARADISE, STUFFED WITH SANDEFIES!' commented my friend John as the thousandth sandfly landed on his lunch. As I studied three similarly self-destructive insects stranded in my Vegemite, I heartily agreed as we tried to recall our original motivation for undertaking this walk. We were attempting to eat our lunch beside the Seaforth River on our seventh day on Fiordland's Dusky Track in the far south-western corner of New Zealand's South Island.

Six days earlier we had been reintroduced to the three great constants of walking in this area: rain, mud and sandflies. A fine and cool day in Te Anau had steadily deteriorated and when we

Around us stretched a panorama of peaks as far as the eye could see, with Lake Hauroko and Caroline Peak in the distance. Davidson



arrived at Lake Hauroko, our starting-point, the summits were shrouded with cloud, and a misty rain was falling. As we waited for the launch to take us the 30 kilometres to the head of the lake and the start of our walk, clouds of sandflies made their presence felt and we hastily boarded our transport to escape them.

As the launch threaded its way through the numerous islands my attention was drawn to the grandeur of our surroundings. Lake Hauroko is the deepest lake in New Zealand and it was carved out by the action of massive glaciers. Sheer-sided cliffs that plunge

the mist. After a brief lunch we set off. Initially the going was easy with attractive views of the burn, then we reached the first of the creeks pounding down from the hill-sides. We attempted to wade across, only to find it disconcertingly powerful, tugging at our feet and threatening to dump us unceremoniously into the flow. After I had struggled across, John decided that discretion was the better part of valour and headed a hundred metres downstream to use a three-wire bridge spanning the creek.

After that, the nature of the track changed. Though clearly discernible and with a gentle

All too soon I arrived at a bridge over the Gardner Burn which marked the halfway point of our first day's walk. Any idea of stopping was put aside as clouds of sandflies descended as soon as I halted. We went straight into the first real climb of the day and traversed above another gorge. Halfway up we came upon a wan figure; Hans



Innumerable waterfalls cascaded down around us. Davidson

hundreds of metres straight into the lake are the result. We passed barely 30 metres from one such cliff with a waterfall thundering out of the mist. The echo-sounder of the boat, with a range of 300 metres, showed no bottom.

All too soon we arrived at the log-choked mouth of the Hauroko Burn. John and I and a party of three decided to have lunch out of the rain at the Hauroko Burn Hut. Hans, a German passenger, opted to get straight into the walk and disappeared into

gradient, its surface became a constant, uneven slush-and-root scramble through the trees. We gradually separated at our different paces and I fell into the familiar blankness of walking, listening to the sound of the burn cutting through the gorge below as I studied the beech trees covered in draggled beards of hanging moss. I was soon lost in the satisfaction of moving quietly under my own steam and the pleasure of seeing new country. The overwhelming impression was of humidity and lush greenness.



Easy walking near Lake Roe. Lake Brilliant and the Kilcoy Mountains are behind. Davidson

was sprawled beside the track. A brief check revealed that he was okay—he simply hadn't imagined that the going would be like this. We went on and the walking gradually became easier. After six hours of uneven walking and scrambling we arrived at the aptly named Halfway Hut in the middle of an otherwise dank and dreary clearing.

A change of clothes, a fire and a hot meal soon improved our mood. As the clouds slowly lifted we could see the sunset-lit Merrie Range towering above us. Hans staggered in just as the light was going and once he'd settled, we learned that he had travelled straight from Germany and on to the walk. His previous New Zealand experiences of the Kepler and Milford Tracks had not prepared him for the Dusky Track.

The next morning was humid and overcast but as we set out the weather steadily cleared and soon we were scrambling through a pale green labyrinth of beech, moss and fern. With the exception of a section of deep mud, the going was more straightforward than the previous day. Walking beside the now much smaller Hauroko Burn, we soon reached

I had a wretched night suffering from an allergic reaction to the sandfly bites. Every hour or two I got up and had a dip in the stream outside the hut to deaden the burning and itching of my swollen legs. As the weather continued to deteriorate it was a question of which I found more bearable, my burning legs or the subzero temperature

the Heath Mountains to the south-west and the Pleasant Range to the north-west. We could not understand why the others hurried through without waiting for a view. We settled in for a quiet rest-day in the hut, reading extracts from Captain Cook's logs on his second visit to Dusky Sound in 1773 and fiddling with our emergency radio to get better reception.

After an unpleasant night the weather improved; however, mist still shrouded the surrounding peaks. We contented ourselves with exploring the easy, open ridgetop, a far cry from the slush and root scrambles of the first two days. With better weather forecast for the next day we hoped that we would be rewarded with some good views.

The next day dawned brilliantly clear and still. We set off with light packs and circled Lake Roe to the base of the ridge to ascend the Merrie Range. This ridge is part of the high-altitude route to the Jaquiere and Florence valleys and is a straightforward, 45° snow-grass scramble. Apart from some disconcertingly slippery, dew-covered sections, we gained height rapidly and soon reached a small, permanent snowfield with an icy lake and miniature floating icebergs. Below us was Snowy Lake; a brief traverse north brought us to our objective—a rounded, unnamed knoll.

We dropped our packs and absorbed the stunning panorama that surrounded us. Before us was a series of previously hidden, carved glacial lakes linked by waterfalls, all reflecting the Tamatea Peaks. A thousand metres below to the east lay the ruler-straight glacial valley of Florence Stream. To the south the Russet Burn stretched



the second and final three-wire crossing for lunch. An unexpected benefit of our gain in height was the comparative lack of sandflies; only the odd individual annoyed us, unlike the clouds at previous halts. We left the Hauroko for the last time and began the steep, 300 metre climb to Furkert Pass. Higher up, the vegetation changed, the beech trees were stunted and twisted with straggles of moss hanging low, and finally we broke out into the tussock land above the tree line. The weather had deteriorated during our ascent and low, misty cloud quickly obscured our views. Finally, we reached the gem-like Lake Laffy in the Furkert Pass and a further five minutes' walking brought us to Lake Roe Hut.

The hut rapidly filled with talk and people as a group heading in the opposite direction arrived. Late in the afternoon I took advantage of a break in the clouds to climb to Lake Roe to get my first proper view of our surroundings. A howling wind, combined with a spectacular, forbidding sunset did not augur well for the next day.

of the water. The icy water proved easier to bear and I continued in my attempts to find at least an hour or two of rest between dips.

The next morning dawned with flurries of sleet. However, John and I had sole occupation of the hut after less than an hour as the other parties disappeared into the mist. Lake Roe Hut is at the junction of three mountain ranges and should have been the scenic highlight of the track. The three ranges are in the shape of a K formed by the Merrie Range, which is the main north-south arm;

'All around us was a vast horizon of peaks, like a great frozen sea of breaking waves, each distinct and separated by a trough.'

towards Lake Hauroko and Caroline Peak. Beyond is the Southern Ocean while to the west are the Dusky Sound and the Tasman Sea. All around us was a vast horizon of peaks, like a great frozen sea of breaking waves, each distinct and separated by a trough. As the day was dazzlingly clear, we could easily distinguish the main peaks of the Alps far to the north, Mts Eamslaw, Aspiring and Cook. I licked my finger to confirm that the air was still. It was a surreal experience that reduced us to gob-struck inabilities such as: 'What a magic view!' And, 'isn't this great?'

Eight of the Best

Classic South Island walks, by *Chris Baxter*

AUSTRALIANS CALL IT BUSHWALKING. AMERICANS call it hiking. But to our flightless cousins just across the Tasman Sea it's definitely tramping (or 'tremprung' as they insist on pronouncing it). Call it what you will, there's no disputing that New Zealand's wild, mountainous and little populated South Island offers some of the best experiences you'll have carrying a heavy rucksack.

Australian bushwalkers have been surprisingly slow to catch on to the joys of walking the Land of the Long White Cloud. Most have heard of the Milford Track and some have walked other popular walks like the Routeburn Track but it has been left to a relatively small minority of Australian bushwalkers to experience wilderness wonders further afield. It is surprising when you consider the convenience and relatively low cost of a visit to New Zealand, not to mention the extraordinary quality of the South Island walking experience.

The sorts of things Australian walkers appreciate about New Zealand include its extensive and spectacular mountain environment; unspoilt wilderness without evidence of logging or four-wheel-drive tracks; a well-managed infrastructure of tracks and huts for *walkers*; a moderate climate; an abundance of drinking water—and no snakes! It is worth noting that New Zealand is aware that there is far more economic benefit to be gained from protecting wilderness and encouraging low-impact activi-



Walk name	Abel Tasman Coast Track
Grade	Easy
Time	Three–five days
Distance	51 kilometres
Type	Coastal doddle
Region	Nelson
Nearest town	Marahau
Start/finish	Marahau/Wainui car park
Special points	The easiest and most popular walk listed. Beautiful coastal scenery.

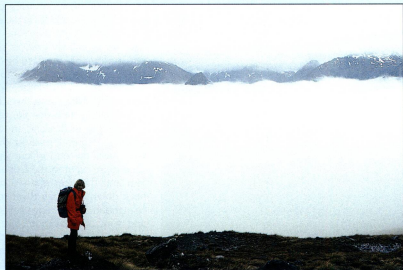
Walk name	Travers–Sabine Circuit (Nelson Lakes)
Grade	Medium–hard
Time	Five–six days
Distance	80 kilometres
Type	Valley walking and alpine-saddle crossings
Region	Nelson
Nearest town	St Arnaud
Start/finish	St Arnaud
Special points	Tranquil lakes, grassy and forested valleys and spectacular mountains; fewer people than on some of the better-known walks further south.

Walk name	Routeburn Track
Grade	Medium
Time	Three days
Distance	32 kilometres
Type	Alpine crossing
Region	Otago
Nearest town	Glenorchy
Start/finish	Routeburn Shelter/the Divide
Special points	A taste of New Zealand's high country. Very popular; numbers are regulated and huts must be prebooked.

Walk name	Rees–Dart Track
Grade	Medium
Time	Four–five days
Distance	70 kilometres
Type	Major valley walking and an alpine-pass crossing
Region	Otago
Nearest town	Glenorchy
Start/finish	Muddy Creek car park/ Glenorchy–Paradise road
Special points	Mountain scenery and wild rivers. Relatively uncrowded. Harder than the Routeburn Track.

Walk name	Milford Track
Grade	Easy
Time	Four days
Distance	53 kilometres
Type	Varied valley walking and an alpine pass
Region	Southland
Nearest town	Te Anau
Start/finish	Glade Wharf (Lake Te Anau)/Sandfly Point (Milford Sound)
Special points	New Zealand's most famous track; spectacular, highly regulated and expensive.

Walk name	Hollyford Track
Grade	Easy–medium
Time	Four–seven days
Distance	56 kilometres
Type	Forest walk ending at the sea
Region	Southland
Nearest town	Te Anau
Start/finish	Lower Hollyford road end/Martins Bay
Special points	Mountain scenery but no alpine crossings.



Sue Baxter pauses above a sea of clouds on the Kepler Track. Left, mountain grandeur on the Rees-Dart Track. Chris Baxter

Walk name	Kepler Track
Grade	Medium
Time	Four days
Distance	67 kilometres
Type	Alpine ridge walking
Region	Southland
Nearest town	Te Anau
Start/finish	Lake Te Anau control gates
Special points	Constructed recently to relieve pressure on other tracks. Steep ascents and descents. Spectacular alpine views.

Walk name	Dusky Track
Grade	Hard
Time	Four–five days
Distance	84 kilometres
Type	Untamed alpine wilderness
Region	Southland
Nearest town	Manapouri
Start/finish	Lake Manapouri West Arm/Supper Cove
Special points	A rugged, spectacular, remote and wet experience.

ties such as walking—a lesson Australian governments are tragically slow in learning. However, it's not all cruising: New Zealand walking will test you with its high rainfall, relentless sandflies and pack-eating mountain parrots—keas.

The listed walks are all best undertaken in summer and are but a sample of almost limitless walking opportunities on our doorstep. Happy trekking! 

Chris Baxter has been visiting high places since his pre-teen days. This activity has taken him to many parts of south-eastern Australia and further overseas. He visits such places at every opportunity—when he is not busy publishing *Wild*.

South Island, New Zealand

- 1 Abel Tasman Coast Track
- 2 Travers-Sabine Circuit
- 3 Hollyford Track
- 4 Rees-Dart Track
- 5 Routeburn Track
- 6 Milford Track
- 7 Kepler Track
- 8 Dusky Track



as we ate our lunch, absorbed the view and tried, inadequately, to capture the moment on film.

Finally, reluctantly, we packed our gear and as we began to retrace our steps, we heard voices. Eventually we distinguished two dots moving on the far-off snow slopes of Tamatea Peak. Such was the stillness and clarity of the day that we could distinguish the conversation of two walkers more than two kilometres away. We descended the ridge and reached the washboard-like terrain at its base—the result of the retreat of the Snowy Lake glacier. Not even the series of 20–30 metre terminal moraines could dampen our spirits as we made the last drop down to Lake Roe Hut. We spent the evening contemplating one of the finest days' walking that I can remember.

After a better night's rest (only two dips in the stream), our sixth sunrise revealed another fine, clear day. We set off past Lake Bright and up the steep, hundred metre climb to the aptly named Pleasant Range for some straightforward, open-ridgetop walking, following the snow-poles between Lake Horizon and Lake Ursula. Gradually we lost height and could see the huge gash of the Seaforth River valley on the right.

We reached the tree line and came to the abrupt end of the Pleasant Range at the junction of the Jane Burn valley. Below us were Loch Maree and the hut that was our destination for the night. As we entered the forest once more we began a knee-popping descent of more than 900 metres in about a kilometre. This descent rapidly degenerated into an endless scramble; we clung to the matrix of roots and vines that holds this near-vertical forest together. At last we reached the valley floor and a brief walk brought us out to the open banks of the Seaforth River. Despite our fatigue, plans for a long rest were shelved due to the reappearance of the ubiquitous sandflies and we headed for the crossing of the river. This structure proved to be the most impressive walkwire of the trip—it is more than five metres above the river and access is by an extension ladder. It provides a perspective of the power and size of the Seaforth River; we had seen photos back in Te Anau of the river in flood, lapping the bottom wire of the bridge. It was just a few minutes' walk along the small peninsula jutting into the loch to the Loch Maree Hut and the junction of the north and south tracks.

Sheltered once more from the sandflies, we made ourselves comfortable in the hut. Our mood soon changed to gloom as we listened to the forecast of very heavy rain for the next couple of days. The track for the side-trip down to Dusky Sound and the Supper Cove Hut is subject to flooding, so we would have to think long and hard about this undertaking, particularly as we had already used a couple of days waiting at Lake Roe. We went to sleep that night hoping for the best.

In the morning the peaks were shrouded in low cloud and it was raining heavily. We decided not to risk being trapped for several days and headed up the river to Kintail Hut.

As we settled in once more to damp, steady walking, the evidence of the local annual rainfall of eight metres was apparent. The track meanders along close to the riverbank at an easy grade. However, about every 500 metres we crossed a deep gutter cut by streams running down from the valley sides, usually no more than a deep culvert. We waded across and scrambled up the other side. The dark, still pools had seemingly bottomless, clinging mud and required careful negotiation; we balanced precariously on waist-deep, submerged logs to get across.

After a brief lunch watching the river rise, we began the climb to the gash cut by the Seaforth River around Tripod Hill. Beside us the river was now a foaming torrent, roaring powerfully over boulders. For the first time that day we struck a broad break in the forest, caused by a major landslide in the 1980s, providing us with another view of the surrounding clouds, cliffs and waterfalls. After almost 20 years, the huge boulder chute remains a rocky scramble barely covered with vegetation. We had one last wade to negotiate the section of track inundated by the rising Gair Loch and at last we reached the haven of the Kintail Hut after nearly eight hours of damp and humid walking.

The next day the weather was unchanged and we set off into the mist for our last major climb, the ascent to Centre Pass. Two more wire bridges and we struck the climb proper. This was similar to the descent from the Pleasant Range but in reverse: a long and steep scramble up a complex matrix of roots almost like a staircase, with the odd rope to assist in the steepest sections. We climbed about 600 metres through the forest

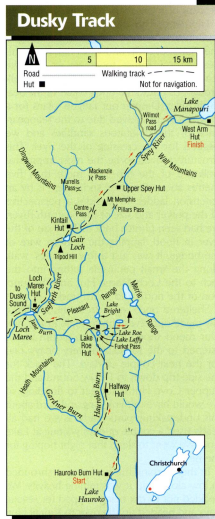
On our eighth day there was another radical weather change; it dawned fine and clear. Rather than walking out we decided to take one final day to return to Centre Pass. With light packs and fine weather we reached the pass, where hardly a trickle of water was visible. It demonstrates how quickly the huge quantity of water runs off the mountains. An hour's scramble up the eastern slopes of the pass brought us to the broad, flat and seemingly endless summit of Mt Memphis. It was to be our last sweeping panorama of mountain summits cut by the Pillars, Murrells and Mackenzie Passes, which provide a passage between the valleys.

We began to descend and with a sense of regret I realised that we were near the end of our journey. One more night in the Upper Spey Hut and the next day we headed back down the Spey River to Lake Manapouri. A final day of misty rain and wire bridges, more forest and sandflies; it was almost as though an intangible bond was gradually being loosened. Our first sight of power lines was followed by the sudden break of the forest at the Wilmot Pass road and the track's end. During the four kilometre walk down this road to our Lake Manapouri pick-up we saw more evidence of civilisation; buildings and bridges.

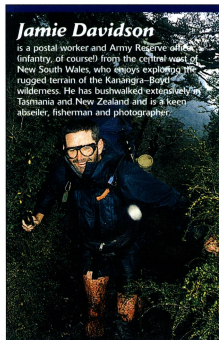
It was as I sat in the covered launch heading back to Manapouri that I really put my finger on it. Listening to the chatter of tourists around me, I began to appreciate the sense of rawness that is the Dusky Track. I felt scruffy and out of place and I thought back over the previous days. The sandflies, mud and rain did not linger in my mind; the wildness, the lush forest and the stark mountains had made a deeper impression. 🐛



The high-wire act over the Seaforth River on the Dusky Track. Davidson



until suddenly we broke out above the tree line. Surrounding us were the exposed bones of the land, devoid of vegetation and with innumerable waterfalls. Above beckoned Centre Pass. We soon polished off this comparatively straightforward section and settled in just below the crest for a welcome hot brew and looked back the way we had come. Any plans for a side-trip were curtailed by the mist and wind whistling through the gap; we packed up and headed down the other side. Fortunately the descent down the hanging valley of the Warren Burn was pleasant and simple and in no time we came into sight of the Upper Spey Hut. Within 50 metres of our haven, you truly managed a face plant into the deepest, slimiest bog of the trip. Immersion in this navel-deep pool of liquid mud strongly reminiscent of the 'sodden Loddon' plains in Tasmania was not conducive to good humour and my swearing and spitting were not helped by John, who rolled around laughing helplessly, getting nearly as dirty as I was. What a way to finish the day!



Jamie Davidson

is a postal worker and Army Reserve officer (infantry, of course!) from the central west of New South Wales, who enjoys exploring the rugged terrain of the Kanangra-Boyd wilderness. He has bushwalked extensively in Tasmania and New Zealand and is a keen abseiler, fisherman and photographer.

Tasman Island sea-cliffs

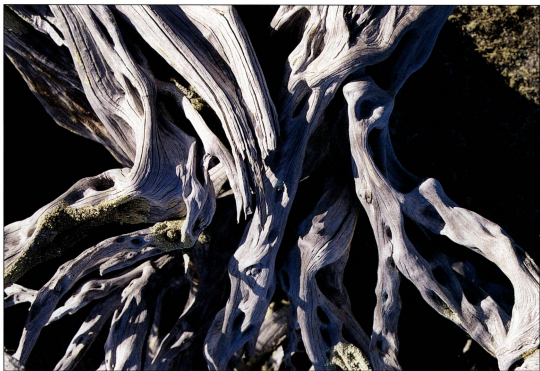
The towering columns of Tasmania's south-east coast, by *Peter Jackson*



Cliff detail. Poa growing in the cracks.

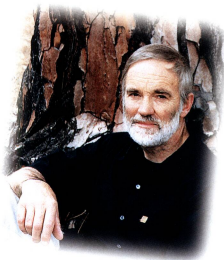


Late afternoon on the western flank of Tasman Island. Beyond is the Tasman Peninsula. The Blade Ridge is prominent.



Weathered branches on Tasman Island.

Peter Jackson has been climbing and photographing for nearly 40 years. Originally from Victoria he has lived in Tasmania for 35 years and has developed a passion for painting and exploring new ways of appreciating the environment. He works as a counsellor at Elizabeth College, where he also teaches photography.



The Blue Breaks

Untracked forests and heart-stopping rock scrambles,
by Meg McKone

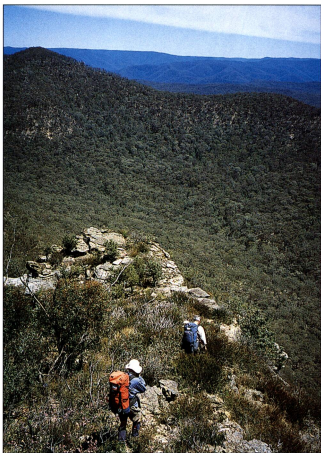
THE BLUE BREAKS ARE PROTECTED FROM the sprawling south-western suburbs of Sydney by the waters of Warragamba Dam. They are a series of cliff-edged plateaux, isolated ridges and sandstone remnants at the southern end of the Blue Mountains National Park, bounded by the Wollondilly and Tonalli Rivers and Butchers Creek. At the end of a slow, bumpy, narrow dirt road leading to the old mining town of Yerranderie, the

of the Tonalli Range. I had no idea then that it would become my favourite day walk, a scenic and challenging entry or exit route for many trips to the Blue Breaks.

The first of these was a weekend visit from Kanangra Walls in 1974, an exhausting trip during which we crossed the Kowmung twice and traversed the Axeheads and Vengeance Peninsula. It whet my appetite for more and on subsequent trips we

heavy pack up and down the steep slopes became too much. We finally succeeded one Easter from Kanangra Walls, using a camp on Butchers Creek as a base for a day-trip to Black Coola Mountain.

On most of these trips we crossed Axehead Mountain and Vengeance Peninsula, frequently camping beneath the bluegums at the junction of Bull Island and Green Wattle Creeks. Perched on top of Vengeance, gazing out at the indigo bulk of Mt Cloudmaker, I would often drop my eyes to the line of upper Green Wattle Creek immediately below me. I wondered how it compared with the middle section—several kilometres of bluegum-clad banks interspersed with scrubby sections of wattle and an intermittent water-supply. There were intriguing glimpses of low cliffs amongst the interlocking spurs. Might there be a hidden canyon in there with a few deep wades, a swim even?



A narrow section of Vengeance Peninsula; Axehead Mountain is beyond. McKone

Blue Breaks are a moderate day's walk from Katoomba or Kanangra Walls.

My first view of the Blue Breaks was from the top of Mt Solitary in the 1950s. I was intrigued by a long plateau in the middle distance edged by high, golden cliffs, so similar in shape to Mt Solitary that it could have been its far-flung twin. Many years later I learned that it was Vengeance Peninsula (named unofficially on the Sydney University Rover Crew's *Gundungura* map), a section

found our way up and down Lacys Tableland with and without ropes and along the middle section of Green Wattle Creek. Next came a series of trips in which we attempted to reach Black Coola, a rather insignificant hill overlooking Lake Burragorang on the eastern edge of the Broken Rock Range from Yerranderie. We got caught in the weight-of-pack-versus-length-of-trip dilemma: we couldn't quite make it in four days but if the trip was any longer the strain of carrying such a



I planned several trips to allow a few hours to walk upstream from the Bull Island Creek junction, but lassitude always took over and we never managed more than half an hour upstream. That was pleasant enough, walking up the partly dry creekbed to avoid the scrubby banks, and plenty of bluegums to admire. During Easter 2001 we ventured a little further and found a superb camp-site—an extensive grassy bank nestled beneath a low horseshoe of cliff and covered with magnificent bluegums. What's more, there was a most unusual feature—an overhang almost hidden by a curtain of nettles which spilled down from the cliff above.

That was it; I had to explore the upper sections of the creek. I decided that I'd better do it pretty soon, or I'd be too old and decrepit to make it. There is no easy way into Green Wattle Creek. It entails a long bash along Scotts Main Range, across But-

chers Creek and down to a low point in the Broken Rock Range—or up and over Axehead Mountain or Lacys Tableland.

I worked out a suitable time with Ian Hickson, of Koondah Tower fame (see *Wild* no 75). 'Right, next October', he said. Ian is a man of few words.

So, in October, late at night, feeling queasy from the lousy road, our group of five reached the camping ground at Yerranderie where we put up our tents and settled down for a short night's sleep. We planned to be up at first light to complete the ridge section along the Axeheads in the morning of what threatened to be a very warm day.

When we set off at 7 am along the five kilometres of road to Byrnes Gap, the sun was already hot on our backs. As we crossed the Tonalli River, the water looked low and stagnant in contrast to the healthy flow of the previous Easter. What did this bode for upper Green Wattle Creek? The country

***'Might there
be a hidden
canyon in
there with a
few deep
wades, a
swim even?'***

Climbing on to one of the rock ramparts of the Axeheads for an excellent view of the Vengeance Peninsula and Axehead Mountain. McKone



*Taking a break on
the Axeheads.
McKone*



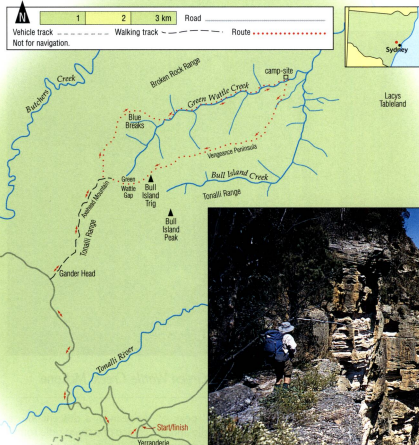
around Yerranderie is surprisingly dry for the Blue Mountains and the creeks at the bottom of the deep valleys are often no more than a string of pools.

We were happy to leave the road and scramble up the now dry and dusty gully to Gander Head, at the southern end of Axehead Mountain. I was suffering from a virus and I reached the top after the others, who had continued along the ridge. I stopped to

bother to retreat but descended an overhanging monkey-style, swinging from the branch of a tree! We had clambered up and down the narrow ridgetop and sidled through honeycombed overhangs. At an open, sandy patch of hillside a delicious perfume wafted past. It was boronia, which grows prolifically along the isolated ridges and makes October the best month for a visit. How I would love to have such a rockery in my backyard!

very steep slope, a friend had asked me to stop while she took a photo. I had obligingly stopped—and then froze, unable to continue. We weren't going to return over Bull Island Peak!

Blue Breaks



take in the view. To the south-west was Lake Burragorang, ringed with the yellow sandstone walls of Burragorang valley; the white sandstone cliffs of Yerranderie Peak and Mootik Plateau were directly south. Next was the basalt-capped Mt Colong, the highest peak in the southern Blue Mountains and to the west the mighty gash of the Kowmung River sliced through a maze of ridges. Here and there a triangle of sloping quartzite reared above the general level and I recognised Cabbage Spire, on a popular route from Kanangra Walls to the Kowmung.

There was little time to tarry so I hurried to catch the others at the foot of a rocky pinnacle. The main section of Axehead Mountain consists of two kilometres of fairly narrow ridgeline where broken ramps keep the walker guessing which is the better strategy—to climb to the top for fantastic views and risk getting bluffed or to follow the base of the cliffline to avoid having to retrace one's steps. On my first trip in the 1970s we didn't

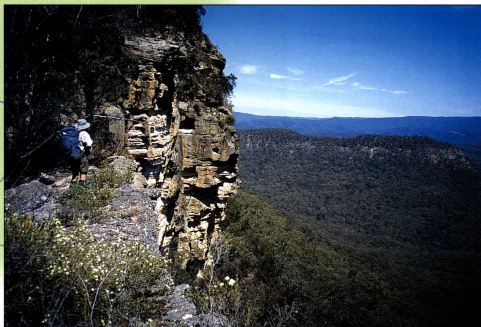
Back to business; Ian was talking about the return route. I'd suggested either Vengeance Peninsula for the views or Lacy's Tableland where the waratahs would be in season. Ian had other ideas and was keen to do Bull Island Peak—not to be confused with Bull Island Trig, which is an isolated knob east of Green Wattle Gap. Extremely steep Bull Island Peak is just to the south of Vengeance, joined to the tableland section of the Tonalli Range by a long, narrow tail. I had nasty memories of the steep, loose slopes up the Peak and even nastier memories of the tail. Many years before at the narrowest section and on rotten rock barely a sandshoe wide, above a cliff and a

great blocks of Vengeance Peninsula. We passed the saddle to the east which we would do in reverse the next day. We were now on the northernmost section of Axehead Mountain, which narrows down to a narrow ridge before halting abruptly above a 160 metre drop on to the Broken Rock Range which separates the catchments of Butchers and Green Wattle Creeks. From a flat, sandstone platform we had an uninterrupted view down to the broad basin of Green Wattle Creek, the ochre cliffs of Lacy's Tableland and the higher sections of the Broken Rock Range beyond.

Though it was delightful to laze in this spectacular landscape, we would have to

'If you enjoy rock scrambling in some of the most spectacular country in the Blue Mountains, the Axeheads and Vengeance Peninsula are for you.'

We continued along the Axeheads, taking care to avoid the head which swings off to the west towards Butchers Creek, and admiring the Kanangra-Boyd skyline and the



From the northern cliffline of Vengeance Peninsula the author looks west to the steep descent route off Axehead Mountain into upper Green Wattle Creek. John Cooper

get moving if we were to reach the creek for lunch and tackle the most difficult part of the trip. We found a gully on the western side of the bluff which took us through the cliffline. Below the gully is an ultra-steep, loose slope and we were forced to negotiate some sections on our backsides. We fanned out and were extremely careful not to knock rocks on those below. Even as the slope began to slacken off we couldn't relax as fires had killed a forest of young casuarinas which had then toppled over to form a maze of interlocking trunks and branches. Finally, we were able to swing east on to the spur which led to our objective, the upper stretches of Green Wattle Creek.

It was quite different from what I had expected: between low cliffs punctuated with eroded overhangs and gullies was a series of descending pools in the open myrtle forest. Eating a late lunch at the first creek junction, I remarked that it didn't look as though anyone had been there before us. 'Well it's not the sort of place that people would normally come to', answered Ian. True, but was it going to be worth a visit?

The first one-and-a-half kilometres were slow but pleasant going over rough river boulders; we passed native white iris and the biggest staghorns I've ever seen. At times the banks widened to form flat, shady terraces beneath the myrtles and although the creek wasn't flowing, there were enough pools to provide water for some delightful camp-sites.

We stopped on an open, leaf-strewn bank to check the map; there were still two kilometres to go and we were in for a late camp. Around the next corner the creek flattened out and the myrtles gave way to bluegums on banks thick with undergrowth but we made good time over the sand and pebbles of the now

mostly dry creek-bed. Frequent side creeks entered through low cliffs, inviting further exploration. Much sooner than I expected, we saw a familiar-looking avenue of bluegums and we climbed the bank to our camp-site.

We put up our flies on soft, green grass beneath the smooth cream-and-grey trunks of the magnificent eucalypts and relaxed with a cup of tea as the afternoon sun lit up the low cliffs at the curve of the creek and sparkled in the leaves high above us. The nettle curtain was still there though it wasn't as luxuriant after the prolonged dry spell.

'You'd have to be mad to do that', he added. Exactly!

Now for the most exciting part of the trip—a vertical, four metre climb down the narrowest section of the ridge, admittedly easy with plenty of jugs to hang on to, but airily exposed at the top of a 60 metre cliff. Before your adrenalin returns to normal a metre wide bridge joins the westernmost blocks of the Peninsula where the cliffline, so high and solid in appearance from the north, is revealed as a narrow, crumbling facade.

We weren't yet back on Axehead Mountain. There was still another scramble to the



Camping in a forest of bluegums on the banks of Green Wattle Creek. McKone

The next morning we were up early again as I knew we'd need nine hours for the trip over Vengeance Peninsula and the Axeheads back to Yerranderie. We crossed the creek and started up a spur which soon joined up with our usual route from the Bull Island–Green Wattle Creek junction. The first few hundred metres were easy enough but two extremely steep sections near the top and my untimely virus had me looking for excuses to rest.

Finally, we reached the top and began the ups and downs along the northern edge of Vengeance Peninsula, stopping to admire the cliffs dropping away beneath us. A garden of boronia flourished among the fire-blackened stumps of twisted stringybarks—phoenix flowers rising from the ashes.

We stopped to look at Bull Island Peak to the south, its north-east access spur looked even steeper than our descent the previous day off Axehead Mountain. I identified the narrowest section on the eastern tail where I'd been stuck and felt very glad that I wasn't there now.

'Fantastic', said Ian accusingly as he looked across at the Peak. 'Best trip in the whole area.'

In protest I pointed out the crumbling, cliffy north-east spur which would have been our descent route.

final peak of Vengeance, a descent into a saddle and the choice of a steep side round the north side of Bull Island Trig or a worse climb over the top. Ian opted for the summit but Margaret and I, who had found the descent on our first journey over the top last Easter rather terrifying, persuaded John and Prue to side. We proved once and for all that the side is faster as we reached Green Wattle Gap at least half a minute before Ian!

After lunch in the Gap and a steep climb up to Axehead Mountain, we were back in the previous day's territory although the views looked different with the afternoon sun gilding the cliffs to the east. At last the scattered houses of the township were visible and we were back at the camping ground water tanks, washing off the sweat and dust of a spectacular weekend.

Are the upper reaches of Green Wattle Creek worth a visit? The myrtle forests and low, sculptured cliffs are unusual, the creek is pretty and the bluegums are magnificent. In spring the flowers are amazing. If you enjoy rock scrambling in some of the most spectacular country in the Blue Mountains, the Axeheads and Vengeance Peninsula are for you. And if you want total exhilaration (or terror), you can accompany Ian over Bull Island Peak. 🍌



Meg McKone

is a keen bushwalker who also enjoys canyoning and other occasional easy rockclimbs. In 1962 she was the first woman to complete the Three Peaks in NSW (see *Wild* no. 69). Meg is making the most of her retirement—leading trips of an exploratory nature in the Blue Mountains and the Northern Territory's Macdonnell Ranges.



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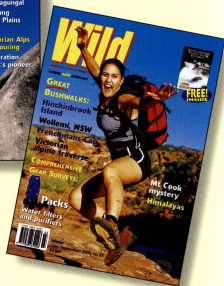
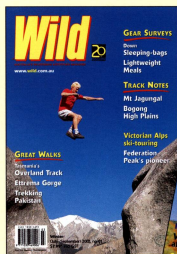
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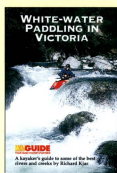
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The upper Dargo River

Stephen Curtain explores Mt Freezeout. Photos by the author



Kate Mutsaers pauses to admire an alpine-ash-studded saddle.

I'D STUDIED A PARTICULAR PEAK, SHOWN ON the well-thumbed maps of John Siseman and John Brownlie's classic guide *Bogong National Park* perhaps a dozen times in as many years and always reached the same conclusion: it looked a chilly sort of place. From a neighbouring ridge some winters ago, I spied this little-known peak through sheets of snow. The view confirmed my suspicions, Mt Freezeout appeared as it sounded—icy and forlorn. Perfect! An exploratory trip would not be far away—but perhaps in the warmer months.

In October 2001, I finally huddled in the shadow of Mt Freezeout with three friends. Flabbergasted by the chilly southerly wind and dancing eddies of snow, I made a mental note to return in even warmer weather.

The off-track, overnight circuit described is well worth the effort although occasionally scrubby. In particular, Louisville—an historical mining settlement deep in the adjacent Dargo River valley—is a step back in time.

When to go

Spring is the best time, especially when the snow has melted! Up to midsummer is also

a good time to see all that this area has to offer.

Safety

Gaiters and/or long pants are a must for protection against scratchy scrub. Carry a minimum of two litres of water, three in hot weather. Do not gather the potentially tainted water from the Dargo River—it rises, in part, near the alpine resort at Mt Hotham. Instead, draw water from the pristine Freezeout Creek. To preserve the area best, remember minimum-impact bushwalking principles, such as the proper disposal of human waste and the removal of all rubbish from wilderness areas.

Map

Take the *Dargo Plains–Cobungra* 1:50 000 Vicmap sheet.

Access

From the Hume Freeway, take the Great Alpine Road through Myrtleford, Bright and Harrierville. Eventually the road climbs to

the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Medium to hard
Length	Two days
Type	Alpine/subalpine, tall forests
Region	North-east Victoria, Alpine National Park
Nearest town	Harrierville
Start/finish	Dargo High Plains road
Map	<i>Dargo Plains–Cobungra</i> 1:50 000
Best times	Late spring, early summer
Special points	Be prepared for heavy scrub and inclement weather

wards Mt Hotham. Turn right on to the sign-posted Dargo High Plains road (suitable for two-wheel-drive vehicles in spring, summer and autumn). Follow the road for four kilometres and park immediately after an unmarked vehicle track on the left (GR 085003) shortly after you pass the summit of Mt Freezeout.

The walk

Walk to the tiny clearing immediately to the east and follow the crest of the ridge north-east through hip-high scrub. Mt Freezeout proper provides the first glimpses of the Dargo River valley. Great views are best enjoyed at GR089007, south-east of Mt Freezeout's summit (1641 metres), but an unnamed knoll to the east (1646 metres) offers more revealing views. Walk east through groves of snow gums. The intervening saddle is the first of several neatly pruned, snow-grass plains on this spur—excellent for a cricket match or a kick of the footy.

Plunge back into the scrub on the other side of the saddle. As you cross the 1600 metre contour, bear to the south of the knoll as scrubby undergrowth soon gives way to clear ground and much easier going. Cross the clear ground to the eastern side of its summit. This is undoubtedly the place

Between 1500–1400 metres are several implied knolls that do not register a contour on the map and are best traversed by skirting round their highest scrubby parts. Immediately below the 1400 metre mark the walking is very pleasant. Follow the flat part of the spur for about 400 metres to an obvious drop-off point at 1377 metres, marked on the *Dargo Plains–Cobungra* map.

At this point the spur heads south. This heralds the final descent to the camp-site, nearly 400 metres below. From here the walking is through glorious alpine-ash stands. Near the foot of the spur, keep an eye out to the east as you may see a dog-leg or right-angled bend in the Dargo River; it signals a change in direction to be taken. Continue a little further down the spur to its termination at a timbered river flat (GR 124992) and the night's camp—wedged between the courses of the Dargo River and Freezeout Creek. Welcome to Louisville.

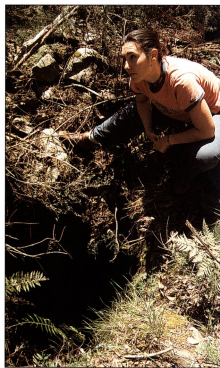
Day two

As you emerge from your tent you'll appreciate the grandeur of this beautiful valley,

Freezeout Creek must soon be crossed; a large log is about 10 or 20 metres west of its junction with the Dargo River. Ascend to the south, gaining the knoll at GR 123987 after negotiating a band of young saplings. Head for the saddle immediately west of the knoll but avoid the thick scrub on the crest of the spur by dropping slightly south down the slope. Sidle west to regain the crest and a beautifully timbered saddle. You may occasionally find brightly coloured tail feathers from the superb lyre-bird (*Menura novaehollandiae*), as we did.

The walking that remains can be categorised as distinctly good or not so good. The next 1500 metres are relatively quick and easily navigable. Avoid thick scrub by dropping off to one side and sidling for a short distance before regaining the crest. Somewhere above 1400 metres a layer of hip-high scrub and many thin, fallen trees will slow your pace. The thicker fallen trees provide an elevated walkway above the tangle of the forest floor. Beware of slippery bark and rotting wood that can suddenly give way.

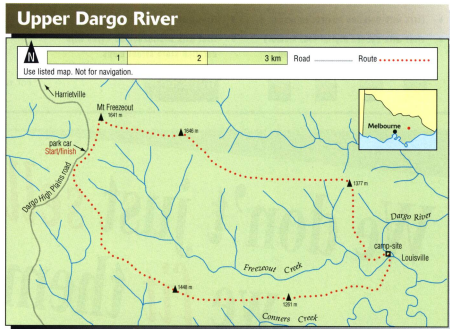
From the crest (GR 089991), amble north-north-west into another delightful saddle be-



Mutsaers above one of the numerous pits in historical Louisville.

for lunch—although it may be a tad early in the day. To the north, Mt Hotham and its associated ski-resort infrastructure rise from the valley, presenting an unusual but engaging view—a mosaic of large snowdrifts usually adorns the peak's bald backside well into spring. An extensive grandstand view unfolds where numerous remote valleys and alpine plateaux are visible.

After lunch the route follows an obvious spur south-east into more scrub. It's only when you're wading, and perhaps cursing, through thick bands of heath that you will notice occasional, faint pads underfoot. These pathways are courtesy of the common wombat, *Vombatus ursinus*. Wombats make life easy for themselves by keeping to the one, well-worn and developed pad.



alive with the colour of flowering wattle and small birds darting from one treetop to another. Steep, forested slopes rise on all sides.

According to Luke Steenhuis's book, *Ghost Mine Towns of the Alps*, miners worked in this area from the 1860s to about the 1880s and at Brocket, another mining settlement upstream on the Dargo River. If time allows—about an extra half a day—it may be worth a look. In Louisville there is ample opportunity to wander among an array of fascinating remains—pits, culvert-like channels and shallow mining shafts are all about this river flat and some features are intricately lined with stonework. Exercise caution as you explore because the relics are more than a century old. The slow creep of greenery—mottled lichens and an entangled understorey of shrubs and grasses—will eventually swallow them.

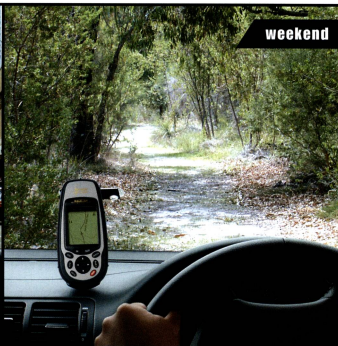
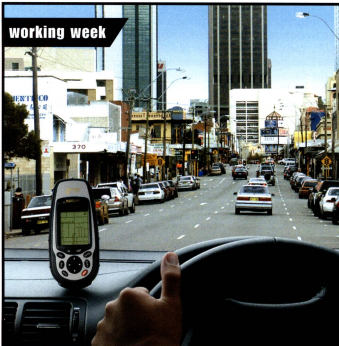
fore the last sting in the tail—a prolific growth of woody heath. The scrub above subsides to reveal a rocky crest before closing in again for the final few hundred metres. Soon you will see the Dargo High Plains road. The car is only 300–400 metres north-east along the road.

After you have taken a parting glance into the depths of the upper Dargo River, it's astonishing to think that a population of some 300 miners once bustled in Louisville for its hidden riches. Before them the Jait-mathing tribe travelled through this valley to feast on nutritious Bogong moths, which still come in their thousands to rest upon the summit of Mt Freezeout.

Stephen Curtin's love of cold and wet places has led him to many remote peaks and rivers throughout the Australian Alps and Tasmania's South-west. Such trips continue to fuel his passion to inspire the wider community with the beauty of wild places and alert us to the threats they face.

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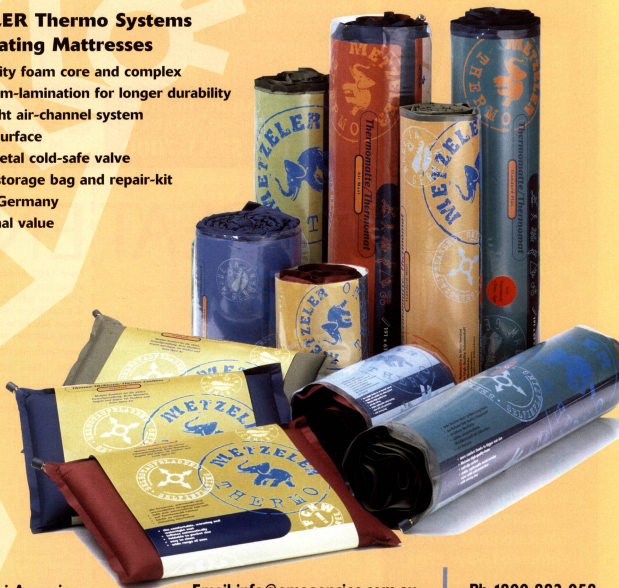
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Waterproof jackets for bushwalking

By Greg Caire

ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO BREATHABLE, WATERPROOF rainwear could be divided into two categories: longer jackets for bushwalking and shorter ones for skiing, bike riding and mountaineering. Today the range includes jackets with hard or soft shells and those made with ultralightweight fabrics. This survey deals specifically with waterproof, breathable jackets for bushwalking.

The nature of bushwalking has changed in the last decade; many walkers now predominantly use tracks in National Parks for which lighter fabrics may be adequate. Adventure racing, rogaining and an overall desire to lighten pack loads have placed increased emphasis on ultralight garments and, despite some compromises of durability, they have been included in this survey.

Nearly all the rainwear surveyed performed adequately or better than adequately at keeping out the rain. Due to modern durable water-repellent (DWR) coatings, seam-sealing (with varying degrees of effectiveness), good cuff design and various laminated, breathable materials most jackets performed well.

The great 'it's as good as Gore-Tex' debate

For years Gore-Tex was the only truly breathable, synthetic, waterproof fabric and most other manufacturers used Gore-Tex as their benchmark. Many manufacturers claim that their fabrics are breathable and waterproof. Trade-marked names include Chameleon, Conduit, Gelanots, GoDri, Helly Tech, Hydro-naute, KS135, Microporous Poly Urethane, Trekite, Tritec and Vaportec. The claim: 'It's as good as Gore-Tex' is often used to describe how waterproof and breathable a jacket is. It's up to you as a consumer to decide what's true and what isn't.

Fabric and construction

The main considerations are effective waterproofing and breathability, versus weight, bulk, abrasion resistance and tear strength. The new high-tech, ultralightweight laminates have one or two layers, often with a mesh liner, and have a high thread-count, tear-resistant outer fabrics and are often very robust for their weight.

Weight

Weights were provided by the manufacturers for medium-sized jackets.



Liquid sunshine, South-west Tasmania. Grant Dixon

Sizing

Some garments are available in men's and women's sizes which may significantly improve fit and comfort. Otherwise size is described as 'unisex'.

Body length and sleeve length

Jackets vary from hip-length to knee-length. Traditionally, mid-thigh has been considered the minimum length for bushwalking.

Shorter garments now have a place, particularly when worn with a pair of lightweight overpants (recommended for colder climates). The sleeves should be long enough to cover your arms when they are extended and to allow substantial, unrestricted movement.

Main front closure

Many different sorts of front closures exist, including double fabric-flaps, double zips,

Waterproof jackets for bushwalking

		Fabric and construction	Weight, grams	Sizing	Body length	Sleeve length	Main front closure	Draw cords	Fabric feel	Cuffs	Hood	Pockets	Design	Comfort	Waterproofness	Breathability	Durability	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
Arcteryx Canada																				
	Theta LT	GT XCR, 3L	700	M	MT	L	C, WZ	E, H, W		E, V	A, F, C	EC, IC	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Expensive, but outstanding design. Pit-zips, waterproof pocket-zips	1200
Fairydawn New Zealand																				
	Apparition fj	GT, 3L, DWR	685	U	LT	M	C, DF, VS	W		V	A, C, F, S	IC, P	●●●	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●	Hood rolls back cleanly with stud closure	450
Helly Hansen Sri Lanka																				
	Haute Route	Helly Tech, 2L, P, ML, DWR	900	M	MT	L	C, DF, P + VS	H	S	E, V	A, C	ZH	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●	Strong shoulder material. Pit-zips	420
Gondwana China																				
	Colo	Tritec, 3L, P, DWR	780	U	LT	XL	C, P, SF	E, W	M	V	A, C, F, S	H, M, P	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●●	Good budget choice	330
	Boomeri	Tritec, 3L, P, DWR	700	U	H	L	C, DF, VS	E, H, W	M	E, V	A, C, F, S	M, ZC, ZH	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●		430
	Muxuri fj	Tritec, 3L, P, DWR	800	W	H	M	C, DF, VS	E, H, W	St	V	A, C, F, S	EC, ZH	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●	Pit-zips; waterproof pocket-zips	440
Karrimor UK																				
	Pioneer fj	KS135, 2L, ML	900	M	MT	XL	C, DF, P	E, H, W	S	E, V	A, C	IC, ZH	●●●	●●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●1/2		350
	Picos	GT, 2L, ML, DWR	800		MT	L	C, DF, P	E, H, W	S	E, V	A, F, S	IC, M, ZH	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●		550
	Wilderness fj	GT XCR, 3L, DWR	900	U	MT	L	C, DF, P	E, H, W	M	E, V	A, C, S	IC, M, ZH	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●		800
Kathmandu China																				
	Tsunami	GT, 3L, DWR	850	M	LT	L	DF, P	W	M	E, V	A, C, S	M, P	●●●	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●1/2		450
	Stormfront	GT and Cordura, 3L, DWR	940	M	MT	M	C, DF, P	E, H, W	St	E, V	A, C, F, S	EC, ZH	●●●	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●●	●●●1/2	Tough Cordura shoulder areas	560
	Torrent	GT, 3L, DWR	720	U	H	M	C, DF, P + VS	E, H, W	M	V	A	IC, ZH	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Reflective tape on arms. Waterproof pocket-zips	600
Macpac New Zealand																				
	Silhouette fj	Reflex Taslan 3L, DWR	620	M	MT	M	C, SF, VC	W	St	V	C, S	EC, P	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	●●●		400
	Olivine	GT Taslan, 3L, DWR	720	U	MT	L	C, SF, VC	W	St	V	A, C, S	H, IC, P	●●●	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●		600
	Resolution	GT XCR, 3L, DWR	745	U	K	L	C, DF, VS	E, W	M	G, V	A, C, S	EC, H, P	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●1/2	●●●●	Outstanding design and performance. Waterproof pocket-zips. Exceptional stretch. Gore-Tex cuff	730
Makalu Australia																				
	Trek fj	Gelanots EKS 3L, P, DWR	680	U	H	M	C, DF, P	E, H, W	M		C, F, S	EC, ZC	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●		400
Marmot Thailand																				
	Precip Jacket fj	1L, HP, DWR	430	U	H	L	C, DF, VS	E, H, S	E, V	A, C	EC, ZH	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	Pit-zips. Impressive lightweight performer	300
	Liquid Steel fj	GT XCR, 3L	800	U	MT	L	C, DF, VS	H, W	M	E, V	A, C, S	EC, ZH	●●●1/2	●●●	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●		900

Waterproof jackets for bushwalking continued

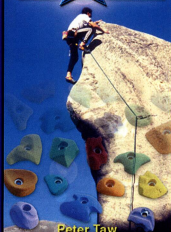
		Fabric and construction	Weight, grams	Sizing	Body length	Sleeve length	Main front closure	Draw-cords	Fabric feel	Cuffs	Hood	Pockets	Design	Comfort	Waterproofness	Breathability	Durability	Value	Comments	Approx price, \$
Mont Fiji																				
	Tempest #	Hydranaut, 3L	810	U	MT	L	DF, P	W	M	V	A, C, S	H, M, P	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●		400
	Overlander #	Hydranaut, 3L	890	U	K	XL	C, DF, P	W	M	V	A, F, S	H, M, P	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	Large Velcro pads on storm hood flap—easily secured with gloves on	470
Mountain Designs China																				
	Snow Cloud †	Repel, 3L	690	U	LT	L	C, SF, VC	E, W	M	V	A	M, P	●●1/2	na	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	●●●		300
	Meridian #	GT, 3L	840	M	LT	L	C, SF, VC	E, W	S	V	A, C, F, S	H, M, P	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●		500
	Stratus #	GT XCR 3L	840	M	LT	XL	C, SF, VC	E, W	S	E, V	A, C, F, S	H, M, P	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	Waterproof pit-zips	580
Mountain Hardwear China																				
	Exposure II	2L Conduit, ML	965	M	H	L	C, DF, VS	E, H, W	M	V	A, C, F, S	IC, M, ZH	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	Pit-zips, powder skirt	450
	Ethereal FTX	GT XCR, 3L, DWR	851	M	H	M	C, DF, VS	E, H, W	M	V	A, S	IC, M, ZH	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	As above	800
Paddy Pallin Australia																				
	Verve/Vortex	GT XCR, 3L	660	M	MT	L	C, DF, VS	E, W	M	E, V	A, C, F	EC, ZH	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	Inner zips to attach fleece jacket	530
	Vista	GT XCR, 3L	750	M	K	L	C, DF, DZ	E, W	M	V	A, C, S	EC, H	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	●●●		530
Snowgum China																				
	Monsoon	Vaportec 3L w/proof laminate	690	U	MT	M	SF, VC	W	St	V	A, S	H, P	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	Good low-budget choice with some limitations	230
	Due South	GT, 3L, DWR	750	U	LT	XL	C, DF, P	E, W	M	V	A, C	H, IC, P	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●●		400
	Ridgeline	GT, 3L, DWR	850	M	MT	M	C, DF, P	E, W	M	V	A, C	H, IC, P	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●		480
Three Peaks China																				
	Bushwalker †	Trekline, 2L, ML	680	U	MT	M	C, P, SF	E, H, W	S	V	F	H, P, ZC	●●	●1/2	●1/2	●●	●1/2	●●	Pit-zips	149
Wilderness Wear Australia																				
	Strider †	Microlight polyester, 3L, ML, DWR	640	U	MT	XL	C, DF, VC	W	S	V	A, S	H, M, P	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●●	●●●	●●●		350
	Million Miler †	Chameleon 3L, ML, DWR	690	M	MT	M	C, DF, P	E, H, W	S	V	F, S	H, M, P	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●		350
	Cascade †	Chameleon Plus, 3L, MN, DWR	760	U	LT	XL	C, DF, P	E, W	M	V	A, C, S	H, M, P	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●		390

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent

Fabric and construction: 1L One layer, 2L Two layer, 3L Three layer, DWR Durable waterproof coating, GT Gore-Tex, GT XCR Gore-Tex XCR, HP Hardened polyurethane, MB Mesh back-vent, ML Mesh lining, MN Multifilament nylon, P Polyurethane, St Stiff, V Velcro continuous, VS Velcro segmented, WZ Waterproof zip, S Stiffened peak, Z Zips off.
 Body length: H Hip length, MT Mid-thigh length, LT Lower-thigh length, K Knee length, Sleeve length: M Medium, L Long, XL Extra long
 Main front closure: C Chin guard, DF Double flap, DZ Double zip, P Press-studs, SF Single flap, VC Velcro continuous, VS Velcro segmented, WZ Waterproof zip
 Draw-cords: E Elastic (not cord), H Hem, W Waist, Fabric feel: M Medium stiffness, S Supple, St Stiff, Cuffs: E Elastic, G Elastic Gore-Tex, P Press-studs, V Velcro, H Hood: A Adjustable tab, C Cords are secured to stop them whipping in wind, F Folds or zips away, S Stiffened peak, Z Zips off
 Pockets: EC External chest, H Hand-warmer, IC Internal chest, M Map (pocket outside of main zip but under zip flap), P Pleated expanding pockets, ZC Zippered chest, ZH Zip hand-warmer
 na not assessed, † not seen by surveyor ‡ not seen by referee # Seen by surveyor but not tested in the field. The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

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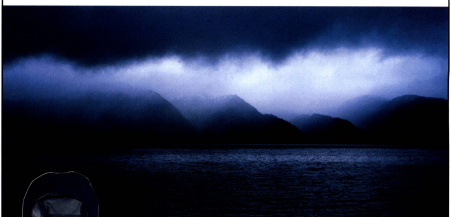
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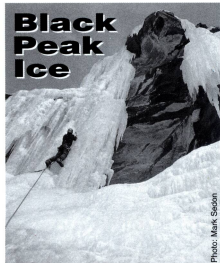


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press-studs, the new 'waterproof' zippers and Velcro. Velcro may be in a continuous strip or sewn in short sections to provide quick access to the main zip.

Draw-cords

Draw-cords are at either the waist or bottom hem of jackets, or both. Some cords are hidden inside pockets or zips to stop them from whipping around in strong winds but they may be difficult to find and manage with gloves on.

Fabric 'feel'

The feel of the fabric is described as supple, stiff or somewhere in between. Supple fabrics are generally less bulky and pack to a smaller size; stiffer fabrics are more robust.

Cuffs

Cuffs should be designed to prevent water from entering the sleeves. An elasticised closure improves the seal.

Hoods

Some hoods can be tucked into collars, others have a fold-back flap to stow them when not in use. Hoods often have a tab to adjust the length of the hood over the face.

Pockets

The many different pockets available include simple, pleated, expanding pockets; hand-warmer pockets; internal chest pockets and external, large-size chest pockets for map storage; (these should be accessible without opening the main zip). Some newer models have effective waterproof zips. A metal grommet or stitched hole is useful in hand-warmer pockets to drain water so that they don't fill up in pouring rain.

Design

This subjective rating reflects how well the design elements of each garment work together. Do the features and materials combine to produce an effective waterproof jacket for bushwalking that is reasonably lightweight, robust and easily adjusted?

Comfort

This is another subjective rating to reflect whether the materials, features and cut are likely to make the garment comfortable when you are carrying a pack in heavy rain.

Waterproofness

This rating is subjective as well but is based on use in the bush. All garments (except where indicated) were used in the field in Victoria (at Mt Macedon, near Melbourne) and in New South Wales (in the Wolgan Valley, near Newnes) in wet bushwalking conditions. Jackets were worn with and without a 17 kilogram pack.

Breathability

Whenever you wear a fabric over your skin, the fabric will retard the evaporation of moisture. Some fabrics have microscopic holes to allow moisture to escape whereas others act as a non-porous membrane (without holes). Breathability is not an absolute. Armpit zips (or 'pit-zips') are sometimes used to help perspiration to escape; however, they may also provide an entry point for water if they are poorly designed.

Buy right

- How hard are you going to be on your jacket? You have a choice of lightweight fabrics for on-track and general bushwalking and heavier, tougher laminates for off-track walking and 'bush bashing'.
- How well does the jacket fit? Do the hood, sleeves and shoulders give you unrestricted movement when you're wearing a loaded pack? Does it fit over thermals and/or a fleece jacket? Separate men's and women's sizes can make a big difference.
- Are the sleeves long enough so that you can lift your arms without the cuffs riding up your forearms and letting in water or restricting movement?
- Does the hood fit tightly around your face to keep out water and will it be easy to adjust when you wear gloves? Can you turn your head from side to side without the hood restricting your vision and range of movement? Are the draw-cords attached in some way to stop them from whipping your face in strong winds? Does the brim have a stiffener to keep rain off your face?
- Are garment-care instructions given? These are crucial for the effective long-term performance of all waterproof jackets.

Durability

This is a subjective assessment of the strength of materials used and their perceived resistance to the abrasive scrub and rocks often encountered off track.

Value

Value is a comparison of quality and cost. The overall effectiveness of the garment was considered, including how well it performed in relation to its recommended retail price. A highly priced garment might be good value if it does its job extremely well whereas a cheap garment is not necessarily good value if it does not perform well. 🟡

Starting as a wide-eyed schoolboy in the Blue Mountains near Sydney, for two decades Greg Coire has been climbing, cross-country skiing and sea kayaking in various parts of the world. The happiness and warmth of poor, rural peoples around the globe are a constant source of inspiration to him.

This survey was refereed by Stephen Curtain.



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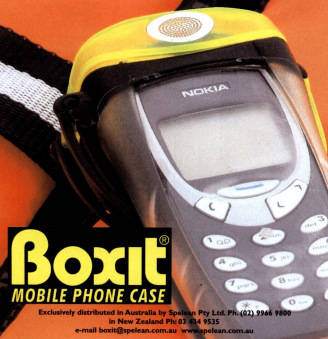
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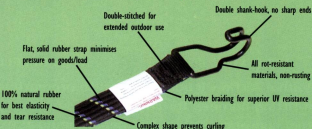
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Day-and-a-half packs

By Jim Graham

THE NEXT TIME YOU VISIT YOUR LOCAL outdoors equipment retailer, cast a glance at the range of packs on offer. It seems that there's a pack for every conceivable pursuit. Runners, cyclists, mountaineers, rockclimbers, day-trippers, multiday bushwalkers and world travellers are all catered for.

Bushwalkers are particularly well off; packs are sized to match the amount of gear you intend to carry. This survey concentrates on middle-sized rucksacks of 40–50 litres suitable for day-and-a-half adventures. The design of some models is closer to that of day packs; they have lightweight harnesses, a tear-drop shape and narrow waist-belts. Others are more like scaled-down versions of the traditional bushwalking rucksack with aluminium staves and padded waist-belts.

Any of the packs surveyed could be loaded with sufficient gear for an overnight walk but some are more suitable for those with very lightweight gear. Such models have limited internal volume and the harness transmits most of the weight to the



shoulders. Some packs are designed with alpine-climbing use in mind and have attachment points for ice-axes and crampons.

Volume

The volume figures are provided by the manufacturers or distributors and are unverifiable. Some of the figures seem rather generous and it's likely that manufacturers use different methods to measure the internal volume of packs.

Main material

Because of the number of fabrics on the market and their elaborate titles, initial comparisons may seem rather complicated. However, by examining the basic construction

Child-and-a-half pack and Bedouin child, Wadi Rum, Jordan. Nick Hancock

Day-and-a-half packs

		Volume, litres	Main material	Weight, grams	Access	Frame	Adjustable back length	External pockets	Harness	Durability	Water resistance	Value	Comments	Approx. price, \$
Berghaus China														
	Dart	40	Textured polyester	1250	T	Y	N	2	••	••/1/2	••/1/2	••/1/2		120
	Bullfrog	50	As above	1100	T	Y	N	3	•••	••/1/2	•••	•••		130
	Freeflow	43	As above	1300	T	Y	N	3	•••	•••	•••	•••	Rain cover, hydration sleeve and outlet	140
Black Diamond USA														
	Stone Pack	40	Textured nylon	1235	T	N	N	1	•••	•••	•••	••	Removable foam-back becomes a sleeping-mat	200
	Ice Pack	50	As above	1685	T	N	N	1	•••	•••	•••	•/1/2	Ice-tool and crampon patches	400
Deuter Korea														
	Air Contact	50	Textured polyester	1950	T	Y	Y	3	•••/1/2	•••	•••	•••	Daisy chain and two ice-axe loops. Wide range of similar models in each size	280
	Vario Futura	50	As above	1900	T	Y	Y	2	•••/1/2	•••	•••	•••	Rain cover. Wide range of similar models in each size	290
Fairlydown New Zealand														
	Little Beaut + fl	45	Nylon	1500	T	N	N	2	na	na	na	na	Hydration-system compatible	160
	Tarn fl	50	Canvas	1500	T	N	N	2	••••	••••	••••	••••	Hydration-system compatible, ice-axe loop	195
Kathmandu China														
	Extras	52	Textured nylon/polyester	1800	T	Y	Y	1	•••	•••/1/2	•••/1/2	•••	Hydration-bladder sleeve, range of add-on pockets	300

Day-and-a-half packs continued

		Volume, litres	Main material	Weight, grams	Access	Frame	Adjustable back length	External pockets	Harness	Durability	Water resistance	Value	Comments	Approx. price, \$
Lowie Alpine China														
	◀ Crossbow	45	Textured nylon	1600	T	Y	Y	1	●●●	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	Unique compression system assists balance	280
Macpac New Zealand														
	Rata	40	Canvas	1000	T	N	N	1	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●●	●●●1/2	Different back lengths available	200
	◀ Tuatara	40	Canvas	1150	T	N	N	1	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	Ice-axe loops and crampon patch	240
	Nikau	50	Canvas	1800	T&B	Y	Y	1	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●		300
Mont Fiji														
	◀ Quartz	45	Canvas	1950	T	Y	N	1	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Dual ice-axe loops and crampon patch	230
Mountain Designs Australia														
	◀ Solo	45	Textured nylon	1400	T	N	N	1	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●1/2	Daisy chain and two ice-axe loops	200
One Planet Australia														
	Gramplan	40	Canvas	900	T	N	N	1	●●●	●●●	●●●●	●●●●		120
	Mad Dog	45	Canvas	1100	T	Y	N	2	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	Internal hydration sleeve	180
	◀ Vertex	55	Canvas	1500	T	Y	N	1	●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●1/2	Ice-axe and crampon attachment points	230
Oz Trail China														
	Balcala f	45	Polyester	1700	T	N	N	2	●●	●●	●●	●●●		70
Snowgum Vietnam														
	◀ Daytourer	40	Polyester	1150	T	Y	N	2	●●	●●	●●	●●1/2		100
	Condor	45	Polyester	1550	T	Y	N	1	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	Hydration-system compatible	120
Tatonka Vietnam														
	◀ Vento	45	Textured polyester	1300	T	Y	N	4	●●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2		140
	Creek	50	As above	2000	T&B	Y	N	1	●●●1/2	●●●	●●1/2	●●●		180
Vango China														
	◀ Super Canyon f	48	Textured nylon	1650	T	Y	Y	3	na	na	na	na	Hydration-system compatible	130
White Mountain Vietnam														
	◀ Lyrebird	40	Polyester	1500	T	N	N	2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●●	Rain cover	150
	Cliffier	45	Polyester	1050	T	N	N	1	●●	●●1/2	●●1/2	●●	Tool loops and daisy-chain webbing	180
Wilderness Equipment Vietnam														
	Contour	42	Canvas	1200	T	N	N	1	●●1/2	●●●1/2	●●●●	●●●		140
	◀ Tourjour	45	Canvas	2200	T	Y	N	1	●●●●	●●●●	●●●●	●●●	Ice-tool attachment points	300

● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent Access: T top access, T&B top and bottom access Y yes N no na not assessed f not seen by surveyor f not seen by referee
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Bushwalking packs for kids

By Jim Graham

IF YOU'RE AN ACTIVE ADULT OR HAVE A frame even remotely resembling that of a mature human male or female, carrying your gear for your next big adventure won't be a problem. Pick a destination and there'll be packs virtually lining up to swallow your gear. If you're a kid, however, precious little has been designed with you in mind.

As the father of an adventurous seven-year-old girl I recently discovered this fact. My daughter was ready to try her first overnight bushwalk. The friendly Wilsons Promontory Parks officer had mailed our camping permits and our gear was ready. All except for the pack, that is!

After visiting 13 specialist shops in the inner city of Melbourne I became rather disillusioned by the lack of a suitable pack. Retailers offered me plenty of day packs which tend to have shorter back lengths but without exception each was still too long.

After an exhaustive search we were successful. Be encouraged, parents, that you don't need to lug *all* the gear the next time you take the youngster on an extended adventure.

As an outdoors educator involved in secondary education I learned very early in my career that it is the height of foolishness to leave parents to make uninformed choices of bushwalking packs for their children.

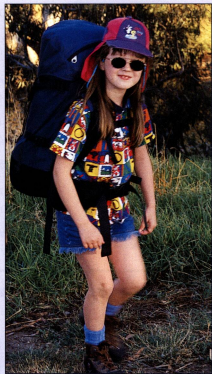
At the start of a seven-day adventure camp to New Zealand I had a teenage girl turn up at the airport with an 80 litre travel pack that her mother had loaded with a full-sized pillow, blankets and a teddy bear. It's a little late to be giving advice at the airport.

When buying a pack for a child the most important consideration is that the torso of a child is immature. It is both shorter and narrower than an adult's, the bones have not yet reached full load-bearing strength and the surrounding musculature lacks the capacity to support heavy weights. Young children require packs with harnesses that are considerably narrower and shorter than those found on adult models. Even packs suitable for multiday use should be lighter and smaller in volume than similar adult models.

As children move through adolescence towards adulthood, their skeletons and muscles develop to resemble more closely those of the mature adult. It is therefore unrealistic to expect that a single pack, even one with an adjustable harness, will be able to 'grow' with the child. Children reach a stage when they will grow out of their packs. Just as forcing children to wear shoes that are too big or too small risks permanent foot damage, the use of an

inappropriate pack risks structural and functional posture problems.

The great outdoors is a tremendous classroom full of educational opportunities for children. To equip a child badly for this classroom is to handicap his or her enjoyment of the experience, potentially turning him or her against future lessons.



You don't need to lug all the gear the next time you take the youngster on an extended adventure. Graham

Buy right (7–10-year-olds)

Children of average build in this age group should not carry packs in excess of 40 litres. A small day-and-a-half pack usually has a capacity large enough for a child to carry some clothing, wet-weather gear, a drink and a lightweight sleeping-bag. The total weight should be kept to about five kilograms.

A suitable pack should tip the scales at about the one kilogram mark. This weight is typical of some lighter day-and-a-half packs.

Avoid packs that do not have a padded waist-belt as these transfer the entire load to the child's shoulders. Ideally the harness should be adjustable to suit growing backs. With the waist-belt in the right place the shoulder-straps should contour snugly to the child's shoulders with minimal creasing. The width of the harness must allow

the shoulder-straps to sit correctly on the child's narrow shoulders.

Buy right (11–14-year-olds)

Children in this age group may be able to carry packs up to a capacity of 50 litres. A larger day-and-a-half pack would enable the child to carry clothing, wet-weather gear, a drink, some food items, a lightweight sleeping-bag and a sleeping-mat. The total weight should be kept to less than eight kilograms.

Suitable packs should weigh about 1.5 kilograms.

The same principles apply for this group as for the younger one—ensuring a correct fit. You should find an increasing number of packs that contour to the back and shoulders. Some day-and-a-half packs designed for the petite female frame may be suitable for this age range.

Buy right (15–18-year-olds)

In this age group is a differentiation in the carrying capacity of males and females. Males typically go through their growth spurt later than females and will begin to approach adult carrying capacity towards the end of this age range. Females may mature earlier than males but should be guided by their size and physical strength. It is in this range that unwitting parents can fall into the trap of buying an adult male pack to fit in more gear. Females should carry no more than about 15 kilograms for extended walks in a pack of between 55–70 litres. Males may be able to carry loads closer to 20 kilograms in extendable packs of up to 80 litres. Adults should carry loads no greater than 25 per cent of their body weight on multiday bushwalks. These figures are for teenagers at the upper limit of this age range and are a guide for those of typical size and strength.

Suitable packs should weigh between two and three kilograms.

Typical bushwalking packs have adjustable harnesses that allow for the growth that can occur in this age range. Some of the better harnesses actually adjust to fit broader shoulders as the back can be lengthened. Look for good-quality waist-belts which will not collapse when loaded. A supportive, comfortable harness is essential for multiday walks and should not be skimped on.

Travel- and hybrid packs tend to have a rotund shape and a removable day pack which shift the centre of gravity of the pack further away from the back, decreasing stability and increasing the drag on the shoulders. I do not recommend this style for multiday bushwalking. 

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of each fabric, its advantages and disadvantages can be ascertained. Canvas is the popular choice among companies in the Southern hemisphere because of its excellent waterproofing and durability. It is usually heavier than nylon and polyester but remains waterproof for longer as it does not rely on perishable laminations and coatings which may wear off.

Weight

The weight of packs in the survey ranges between one and two kilograms. I tried to set two kilograms as the upper limit for a day-and-a-half pack although one model is just above this limit. The larger packs with alpine-climbing features were often at the upper end of the scale whereas the smaller, simpler packs were considerably lighter.

Access

The majority of the packs in this survey have top-access designs with a draw-string throat. This design allows easy access to gear without compromising the water resistance of the pack. Long zips, especially those around the perimeter of the pack, are difficult to seal.

Frame

The rigid aluminium staves used so effectively in larger packs to transmit the load to your hips are a feature of less than half the packs surveyed. Some manufacturers have inserted removable backing boards so that you can make the pack lighter and less rigid for day walking. Others have incorporated curved frames to maximise ventilation. Day-and-a-half walks usually entail distances and sufficient weights to make a rigid frame a highly desirable feature.

External pockets

External pockets are commonly on the sides, top or front of a pack. They can be handy for quick access to wet-weather gear and maps but more than two are unnecessary.

Harness comfort

One of the most important considerations when you buy a pack is how comfortably the harness distributes load to the body. Fixed harnesses are usually lighter but tend to compromise on fit whereas adjustable harnesses provide an exact fit for different torso lengths. Ratings have been awarded according to how well the harness straps contour to weight-bearing surfaces, thereby avoiding pressure points. Padded waist-belts rate better as do designs that provide ventilation for the back.

Durability

Packs that are made with highly durable fabrics or multiple fabric layers in high-wear areas are rated more highly. The laminations or coatings used for water resistance on nylon and polyester fabrics were examined and

compared with those of canvas. The quality of the stitching, reinforcement points and zips is also reflected in the durability rating.

Water resistance

Simplicity of design often contributes to the water resistance of a pack. Seams, flaps and zips are all potential points for water to get in. The traditional top-entry design with a draw-cord throat and a minimum of external pockets is rated highly. As noted earlier, canvas resists water more effectively than other fabrics and its use as a main material thus attracts a higher rating.

Buy right

- **Size:** lay out the gear that you would expect to take on a day-and-a-half walk. Don't forget to include water-bottles, a first aid kit and food. Some bushwalkers may get by with the smallest, lightest models, but choose a pack that will accommodate all your gear with a little room left over.
- **Fit:** short-list a number of models that match your size requirements, then load them with your gear and try them on. The waist-belt should be padded and allow weight to transfer evenly to the hips. The back length of the pack should enable the shoulder-straps to contour without creasing. The sternum strap should be adjustable for height and width.
- **Ventilation:** the pack design should permit air to flow around your back and the materials in contact with your back should absorb minimal perspiration.
- **Construction:** areas of high wear should be reinforced with additional layers of fabric or abrasion-resistant materials. Check the quality and placement of zips, seams, webbing and buckles.
- **Extra features:** avoid paying for features you don't need. Crampon patches, ice-tool loops and daisy chains are for alpine-climbing enthusiasts. Hydration sleeves and external pockets for wet-weather gear are desirable features for bushwalkers.

Value

It was not possible to test the packs included in this survey in the field. The value rating is a subjective assessment of how well the pack could be expected to perform for its intended use in conjunction with its recommended retail price.

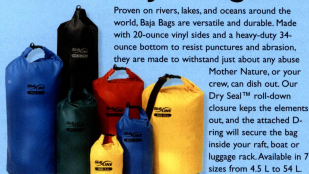
Approximate price

The prices indicated in this survey are the recommended retail prices provided by distributors. ●

Jim Graham is a Melbourne-based physical/outdoor educator of 15 years' experience. He enjoys sharing his love of bushwalking, mountain-bike riding and white-water rafting with young people. His favourite outdoors classrooms are in the South Island of New Zealand.

This survey was refereed by John Chapman.

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Packtowl® is the original high-performance camping and travel towel that makes terry cloth towels obsolete for outdoor use. Lightweight and compact, **Packtowl** fits easily in your pack, duffel, or travel kit. Besides keeping you clean, **Packtowl** comes in handy for plenty of other reasons around camp. Use it to wipe up puddles on your tent floor, insulate and pad gear inside your pack, and provide emergency first aid dressing. It doubles as a dish cloth, pot holder, and sweat-absorbing bandana.

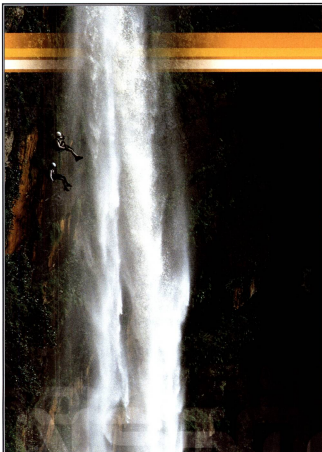
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Compact kayaks

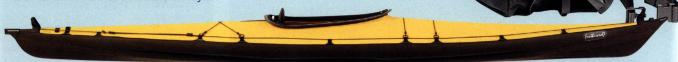
If you would like a kayak but don't have a place to store it, a **folding kayak** could be the answer. Two brands of folding kayaks have recently been added to the Australian market.

We are told that **Feathercraft** is a top-of-the-line brand made in Canada; its kayaks have been used in large-scale expeditions such as Atlantic crossings and trips round Cape Horn. The design is apparently based on the traditional Inuit kayak design of animal skin stretched over a flexible frame—Feathercraft kayaks have an aluminium frame covered with a woven PVC skin. The skin has a life expectancy of 20–30 years and the flexible frame is said to create a stronger craft than rigid alternatives. A 4.5 metre Feathercraft kayak

weighs approximately 16 kilos, and prices start at \$4500.

Nautiraid kayaks, made in France, are lower-priced models designed for recreational use. A 3.25 metre kayak weighs 10 kilos and prices start at \$2800. The kayak folds into a one metre high rucksack and can be assembled in about 15 minutes. Feathercraft and Nautiraid kayaks are available from **Paddle Planet**, phone (07) 3262 4491.

The Feathercraft Kahuna kayak folds into a purpose-made rucksack for easy transportation and compact storage.



Hi warmth from low weight

Thermal Pro Hi Loft fabric is the latest offering from **Malden Mills**, manufacturer of the Polartec fabric range. It is a double-stitch, medium-weight pile and it is apparently the warmest for weight compared with other Polartec fabrics. The pile is high loft and low density, designed to trap and hold warm air. It is a mid-warmth fleece (like Polartec 200) so it is suitable as a middle insulation layer under your rain jacket or as a lightweight pullover for use during stop-and-start activities.

Paddy Pallin is one brand that has taken up the new fabric for its winter range. The new **Hi Loft Technical Jacket** is a close-fitting cut with stretch panels to provide freedom of movement in the shoulders and arms, flat-lock seams and four zippered pockets. Paddy Pallin's range also includes a women's jacket, a vest and a pullover. Available from Paddy Pallin shops. Call 1800 805 398 for further information. RRP's range from \$149 for the vest to \$249 for the jacket.

Catenary what?

Wilderness Equipment has designed a new range of catenary-cut **fly-sheets** to replace the humble tarpaulin. 'Catenary cut' refers to a curve which is cut into a fabric before it is sewn. Wilderness Equipment cuts the fabric with a curved edge on one side and joins it to another curved edge. The curves remove a narrow almond shape of fabric from the middle of the fly to provide a more even tension than a straight seam (straight seams have greater tension on the edges and corners and less tension in the middle). The fly-sheets are made from 75 denier Ripstop nylon, are seam-sealed and have reinforced attachment points. They are available in three sizes, for solo use and up to group use. For more information, call **Sea to Summit** on 1800 787 677. Prices range from \$129 to \$249.

Correction

In *Wild* no 84, the Stäger Sport advertisement for Meindl boots listed an incorrect Web site address. The correct address is: www.meindlboots.au.com

For the seriously active

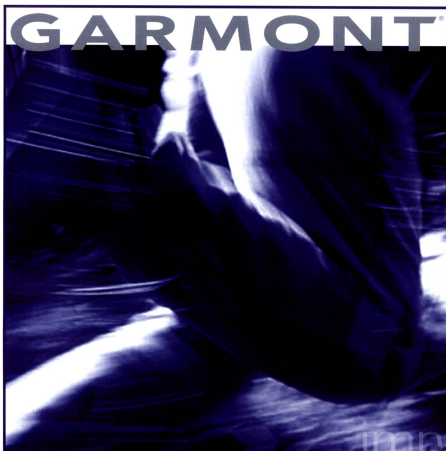
For those readers intent on moving through the great outdoors at a hectic pace, some new gear may help you to go faster. **Ultimate Direction** has developed two **hydration packs** designed specifically for women. The **Luna** is a streamlined 11 litre pack with a 1.8 litre 'Roll-Top SportTank' inside. Its harness and waist-belt are designed for the female form and are adjustable. RRP \$159.95.

The **Diva** is a larger pack with the same size bladder. RRP \$199.95.

Ultimate Direction has released the Luna, a hydration pack specifically designed for women.



After strapping on your hydration pack, slip into your **Scarpa Oxygen approach shoes**. The Oxygen range is designed for multidiscipline athletes and adventure racers although the shoes are also recommended for travel and light bushwalking. Apparently they have 'intelligent soles', so perhaps they will assist with navigation as well! Available in two models and in men's and women's fits. Distributed by **Outdoor Agencies**, phone (02) 9438 2266. RRP \$249.



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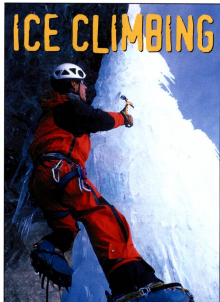


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Waterworks

The **MSR MiniWorks water filter** is a ceramic-based water-treatment device designed to remove protozoa (including giardia and cryptosporidia) and bacteria that cause water-borne illness. The main ceramic filter removes harmful organisms and a solid-block carbon core then removes chemicals such as pesticides, iodine and chlorine. The filter is very robust—it is made from an impact-resistant polyurethane material and is easy to maintain in the field. A small abrasive pad is included for cleaning to keep the system functioning correctly on long trips. The manufacturer states that the flow rate is a litre of water every one-and-a-half minutes. The unit screws on to Nalgene water-bottles and MSR Dromedary water-bags. The unit is very rugged and at 456 grams is a lightweight, effective and reliable water-treatment system. The manufacturer does not claim that the unit can remove viruses; MSR recommends that water that may contain viruses should first be treated

with iodine, then filtered with the unit to remove the iodine after its action is finished. Call **Sea to Summit** for stockists, phone 1800 787 677. RRP \$169.00.

Greg Caire



The MiniWorks water filter by MSR is lightweight, compact and effective.

On the theme of water treatment, **First Need Deluxe Water Purifiers** can now be fitted with a **'Direct Connect' Adaptor** to fit the unit to your water-bottle. The Purifier connects to Nalgene and Sigg bottles. The adaptor enables the unit to be attached to other water-bottles including Platypus and Camelbak systems. From **Purifiers (Australia) Pty Ltd**, phone (08) 8359 3000.

Knick-Knacks

* **Berghaus** has redesigned its **Freeflow day packs**, which range from the Freeflow 20 (20 litres) to the Freeflow 35 + 8 (35 litre capacity and two four litre side pockets). The five packs have been overhauled to include a pack-away rain-

The Berghaus Freeflow day pack, with form-fitting harness and internal hydration sleeve.



cover in the base, Diamond Ripstop fabric and an internal hydration sleeve and neoprene hose exit. Distributed by **Outdoor Agencies**, phone (02) 9438 2266. RRP \$99.95 to \$139.95.

* Once upon a time, owning a **head-torch** meant owning a Petzl Zoom. Today the range is much broader and

Princeton Tec has added to it again, with two new products. The **Aurora** is a waterproof LED headtorch that has three levels of light output and two flashing modes. It weighs 85 grams and retails at \$79.95. The **Switchback** has



The Princeton Tec Aurora has a triangular LED and weighs less than 85 grams.

five different light-output/power configurations and can be run on either two AA batteries in the front casing of the torch or four C-cell batteries in an external, waterproof battery pack. If the torch is run economically on a low light setting, it can provide more than 200 hours of light. Call **Outdoor Agencies** for stockists, phone (02) 9438 2266. RRP \$199.95.

* **Vigilante** is a new clothing brand in the travel- and outdoors arena. Its cool-

looking garments which 'combine performance and practical travel features with contemporary styling' will be available in shops this winter. See them at www.vigilante.com.au

* Water damage can be disastrous for a first aid kit as some items could become useless. To avoid soggy bandages and rusty tweezers, one option is **Sea to Summit's** new **waterproof first aid kit**. It comes in a lightweight dry bag and is red with a white cross, for easy identification. Call Sea to Summit for stockists, phone 1800 787 677. RRP \$19.95 for a small kit and \$24.95 for a medium kit.

* **Sea to Summit** has brought out two new hats for winter: the **Kimberley** is a broad-brimmed hat made from Gore-Tex and is available in four sizes; the **PacLite cap** is made from Gore-Tex PacLite. The hats are designed to protect the wearer from sun or rain. For more information, call 1800 787 677. Hat RRP \$79; Cap RRP \$49.95. ☼

Sea to Summit's new range of hats includes the Kimberley, a Gore-Tex hat to keep off the sun and the rain.



trix Hints for bushwalkers by Marlene Chesney

1. Dilute methylated spirits for use in a Trangia stove. The ratio should be one part of water to nine parts of methylated spirits. Dilution prevents carbon from building up on pans—and it keeps your hands clean, too.
2. Take a roll of Leukoplast when you go bushwalking. It's a strong adhesive tape which is great for preventing blisters on your feet. You can also use it to repair anything from gaiters to tents.
3. Put a sheet of Ripstop nylon under your tent to protect the floor. It's light and extremely strong.
4. Unzip your sleeping-bag and tent before you pack them in your rucksack to extend the life of the zips.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

Products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au

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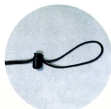
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- Suitable for use to -5°C



Super Reflecto

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7 Hole Microblend

Provides world-class insulation.



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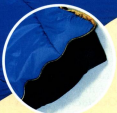
Twin Zips

Two zips – one at base, the other along the side, to join two sleeping bags together, bottom zip for ventilation.



Zip Tape

Runs along the zip to prevent it from snagging.



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Covers the zip to eliminate cold draughts and heat escaping.



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GOOLENGOOK GONE?

'Gippsland supports the most diverse range of temperate forest ecosystems anywhere on earth. If I could save only one area of temperate forest in the world it would be East Gippsland...'

Professor David Bellamy

Of the temperate forests remaining in East Gippsland since Bellamy proclaimed their beauty and importance, Goolengook is the most controversial. In the last decade, 122 000 hectares of temperate forests in East Gippsland have been clear-felled, burnt and wood-chipped and the prognosis for the remainder is dire.

On 5 March the Bracks Government removed conservationists from the Goolengook Road forest rescue camp and began logging and wood-chipping in an enormous joint operation between police and the Department of Natural Resources & Environment (DNRE). Four coupes totalling 90 hectares have been logged and four more are under way. All this after Premier Steve Bracks released a major review of Victoria's forests showing that East Gippsland forests had been overlogged—the report recommended that the timber supply coming from East Gippsland be reduced to a sustainable level. The government has established a 30 kilometre exclusion zone surrounding the forest to prevent access by conservationists. Bush-



Jill Redwood addresses a gathering of 'Forest Forever' at an Easter camp in East Gippsland. Left, Gavan McFadzean of the Wilderness Society leads a group into the threatened Goolengook forest. Eli Greig

walking is outlawed in Goolengook but the industrial sector is allowed to pillage the forest for its own purposes.

Established in 1997, Goolengook was Australia's longest-running forest blockade. As many as four hundred conservationists have been arrested there including Greens Senator Bob Brown. Goolengook has survived 65 million years and 19 ice ages, it contains populations of some of Australia's most endangered flora and fauna including the slender tree fern, the long-footed potoroo, the powerful owl and the critically endangered spot-tailed quoll.

Goolengook has long been fought over: in the 1980s it was investigated for inclusion in the National Forest Estate listings; however, the then Forestry Commission bulldozed a road through the valley and the now famous blockade began. Since the blockade was busted, more than 65 conservationists have been arrested in attempts to save Goolengook.

There are many ways for concerned individuals to get involved in the campaign but, as Bob Brown said, 'the first thing that [citizens] should do is go to Goolengook. It doesn't belong to the logging companies and it doesn't belong to the police or Steve Bracks. He is the custodian, but it's the people's forest.'

Eli Greig

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Snow to go?



Imagine skiing home along your favourite cross-country track. It has been a long day of walking over soil-stained patches of snow separated by grass and exposed rocks. And this in the middle of August.

This could be a familiar scene for cross-country skiers in the not-too-distant future. Our continued burning of fossil fuels on a massive scale is forecast to reduce snow cover significantly. According to the CSIRO a warming of 1.3 degrees Celsius, probable by 2030 at present greenhouse gas emission rates, could reduce the areas that usually get 30 days of snow cover by 66 per cent.

Even if we make a radical shift to renewable energy, our legacy of decades of excessive fossil fuel combustion and accumulated greenhouse gases will still result in an additional warming of 0.3 degrees, which translates into an 18 per cent reduction in snow cover. The managers of alpine resorts prefer that this information be left in academic reports; to them the range in the forecasts translates as a lack of credibility in the science. Few in the alpine industry want 'crystal ball' predictions to deter investment in infrastructure.

However, we've recently gone one step further than making predictions. We are observing the impacts of climate change, which allows us to compare the model's predictions with observed data. It is becoming clear that scientific predictions of global warming are all too accurate.

In March a very significant climate event occurred: the 720 billion tonne Larsen B ice shelf broke off the Antarctic Peninsula. Its collapse had been predicted by climate models. However, the collapse occurred ahead of schedule. Climatologists have not only been vindicated, their predictions have been shown to be conservative.

What does all this mean for cross-country skiers? Possibly a fate similar to that of the mountain pigmy possum, whose habitat will be lost when warming reaches one degree. A radical rethink of climate policy and fossil fuel use is required.

Al Hoban

▲ Act now

Friends of the Earth campaigns on climate justice issues. For information on how to support the campaign, contact Al Hoban on (03) 9419 8700 or visit www.foe.org.au

Electricity bills to show greenhouse gas emissions

Victorian households and businesses will be the first in Australia to receive electricity bills that show their respective gas emissions, calculated from power usage, reported Richard Baker in the *Age* on 8 April. The inclusion of this information was part of an election pledge regarding the environment by the Bracks Government. The aim of the legislation is to remind households and businesses of alternative energy. It is hoped that the information will prompt more Victorians to choose green power and to drive the demand for the development of cleaner energy sources.

How big will Yengo go?

As the New South Wales Government ponders the establishment of 48 areas with a total of 1.2 million hectares of new wilderness in northern and southern NSW, another new wilderness just north of Sydney is to be considered for protection.

The 134 000 hectare Yengo Wilderness has undergone assessment no less than three times but, finally, a proposal was released for public comment at the beginning of 2002.

The wilderness may not be fully protected if the government proposal is adopted. Two four-wheel-drive tracks cut across it, Mt Yengo is excluded and a multitude of

inholdings and proposed horse-riding areas have shrunk the area recommended for protection to 105 000 hectares.

Andrew Cox

▲ Act now

Write to Bob Debus, Minister for the Environment, seeking protection for all Yengo's identified wilderness and asking for a decision to be made now to protect all other identified wilderness in northern and south-eastern NSW.
Address: Parliament House,
Macquarie St, Sydney NSW 2000;
fax: (02) 9281 1115.

Royal deer's time is up

The increasing feral deer population in Royal National Park south of Sydney may soon be controlled due to the Christmas bushfires and uncharacteristic political willingness.

A plan to take advantage of ideal cull conditions after the 1994 fires to control the 150 strong herd was halted days before it was to begin when a tabloid newspaper ran a sensationalist front-page story about the plan.

The herd in the National Park numbers 2500 and sympathy is strong for the rehabilitation of the too-often-burnt park. The long-awaited deer management plan recommends culling the deer by trained marksmen.

Shooting was to start in February 2002 as most of the park remained closed to visitors after the bushfires.

AC

Otways stoush

In January the Victorian Government struck a deal with the Otway Ranges Environment Network (OREN) in which members of OREN agreed not to interfere with the logging of six coupes in water catchments in the south-west of the State as long as the government deferred logging in 34 other environmentally contentious areas, reported Claire Miller in the Melbourne Age on 11 April.

A shortfall in timber yield from the areas logged has prompted the government to breach the agreement and begin logging in areas it had agreed not to touch. OREN spokesman Simon Birrell stated that the government should avoid confrontation between local and conservation interests and the loggers by compensating the loggers or choosing non-contentious coupes. He noted that the shortfall indicated that logging in the region was unsustainable.

A spokeswoman for Environment & Conservation Minister Sherryl Garbutt said that the deal had always been dependent on the six coupes yielding the required volume of timber. The DNRE is to choose two or three coupes to cover the timber shortfall which, according to OREN, was a staggering 50 per cent of the yield DNRE had estimated.

New Zealand ends rainforest logging on public land

In early April New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark announced that 130 000 hectares of rainforest controlled by the government-owned logging company Timberlands West Coast would be added to existing National Parks and other conservation reserves.

The announcement brings to an end a campaign by environmentalists against the logging of native forests on public lands. For Pete Lusk, an environmentalist from the small west-coast town of Westport, the announcement is a dream come true. 'It's a wonderful achievement by thousands of activists over a 30-year period', he said.

Among the inclusions, 18 000 hectares of lowland rainforests near Okarito lagoon—which has panoramic views of Aoraki (Mt Cook)—are to be added to the Westland National Park on New Zealand's South Island. Further north, the Paparoa National Park—which features coastal ranges and limestone river gorges—has also been extended.

President of Forest and Bird, Gerry McSweeney, sees the rapid growth in tourism creating a new challenge for environmentalists in ensuring that the new parks aren't 'spoilt by over-commercialisation'.

However, when 100 environmentalists gathered in Westport over Easter to celebrate the end to logging, not all locals shared their enthusiasm. 'Greenies not welcome', screamed the headline in the local newspaper.

Bob Burton

Reef trawl ban reversed

The Howard Government has overturned the decision to protect about 900 square kilometres of the Great Barrier Reef from inshore prawn trawling reported Amanda Hodge in *The Australian* on 27 February. The Federal Government released new boundaries for the protected area, some 400 square kilometres less than had been initially allocated. Hodge reported that locals and conservationists believe the government was pressured to reduce the protected area by powerful Queensland commercial fishing interests. The area is particularly contentious because it is adjacent to the sensitive Hinchinbrook dugong protection zone.

Ironbark fragments preserved

Some of the remains of Victoria's box ironbark forests are to be protected reported

Ben Packham in the Melbourne Age on 27 February. The Victorian Government is to create four National Parks and a few reserves to save most of what is left of this species, which amounts to about 120 000 hectares.

The new National Parks will be near Beechworth in the north-east, St Arnaud in the west and near Bendigo and Heathcote in central Victoria. The forests are the habitat of up to 300 endangered plants and more than 50 animal species.

WOOD-CHIPS

* **Environment Victoria** tells us that a new social research report shows that there has been a marked increase in public concern about **climate change**. Eighty-eight per cent of Victorians now believe that climate change is mostly the result of human actions.

* **The Larsen B ice shelf on the Antarctic Peninsula** has collapsed. It is reduced to a size not seen since about 10 000 BC. Another very large iceberg has sheered off the Thwaites Glacier on the coast of West Antarctica. According to scientists the break-offs were caused by atmospheric and ocean warming.

* **Land clearing in New South Wales** is continuing at an excessive and unsustainable rate and the State Government is either unable or unwilling to control the problem, report the World Wildlife Fund and the Wilderness Society (TWS). These two organisations will lobby the NSW government to reduce logging to a sustainable level.

* **Membership of TWS** is now at a record high. To join, call 1800 030 641 or log on to www.wilderness.org.au/join

* **Want to escape oil companies?** Got a diesel vehicle? You can run it on waste vegetable oil. See www.veggievan.org or www.journeytoforever.org

* Environmental activists continue to occupy treetops and chain themselves to trees in **Ecuador's Amazon jungle** as part of the international campaign to block the construction of a proposed crude-oil pipeline.

* To be part of a network of landholders who are protecting native flora and fauna on their own property, contact **Bush for Wildlife** by phone (02) 9818 2684 or by email: heather@sydney.net

* **Regeneration programmes** work to reafforest degraded land but many of the regenerated zones are mismanaged. **The Rainforest Monitoring Project** aims to create community awareness of the need for ongoing management of regenerated areas. For more information, contact Binna Burra Mountain Lodge on 1800 074 260 or Alison Specht on (02) 6620 3755. ●

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to the Editor, WILD, PO Box 415, Prahlan, VIC 3181 or email: wild@wild.com.au

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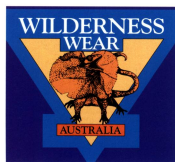


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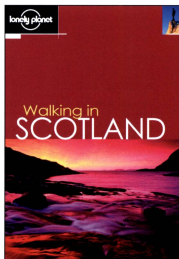


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Walking in Scotland

by Sandra Bardwell and others (Lonely Planet, 2001, RRP \$30.80).

Lonely Planet's walking guides have matured into finely polished, inspirational editions crammed with fascinating maps and other details. They have become essential reading

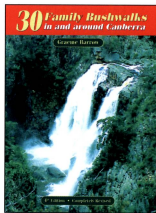


for anyone planning a walk in one or more of the (ever increasing number of) popular regions they cover. *Walking in Scotland* continues this trend admirably. Mostly day walks or shorter, the 75 walks described range from an Edinburgh city ramble to strenuous undertakings in Scotland's highest and most far-flung points, including on the bigger offshore islands.

Chris Baxter

30 Family Bushwalks in and Around Canberra

by Graeme Barrow (Dgraia Press, fourth edition 2002, RRP \$16.50).



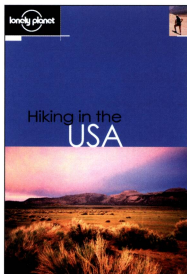
Originally published in 1977, the new edition is said to be completely revised. The walks range from a town stroll to more demanding (but hardly taxing) day walks.

CB

Hiking in the USA

various authors (Lonely Planet, 2000, RRP \$33).

Compiling a 'best-of' guide to the USA's most interesting hikes is a formidable task. It's a project that could easily stretch to several volumes. This first edition by Lonely Planet is an admirable effort; it contains comprehensive sections on flora and fauna, detailed access notes, maps and planning information and numerous anecdotes. It is



a detailed guidebook that's also interesting to read. Its 500-page length means that not everything can be included but it is a worthy purchase for anyone planning or undertaking a walking holiday in the USA.

Greg Caire

The Second Step

(video produced by Suzanne Davies, 2001, RRP \$29.95; see the Web site www.partanimal.com for distribution information).

This video celebrates another milestone in Warren Macdonald's recovery after a bush accident that cost him both his legs. The focus is a climb of Federation Peak in Tasmania's South-west. A worthy exploit even for the 'able-bodied', it takes a phenomenal effort for 'Wazza' to muscle across the plains and battle the storms and crags that defend this prized summit.

Spectacular footage of the 28-day climb underscores the uplifting power of place in Macdonald's life. Credit, too, for the team of friends who supported his climb. But the most intensely moving images are of the man himself, driving onwards and upwards, defying the odds and demonstrating an emphatic belief in that which is wild and free. 🐾

Quentin Chester

Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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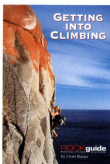
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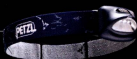
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